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Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame

Charles J. Doherty, a newspaperman for more than 50 years, was called "The Fighting Irishman" and "Uncle Charlie" because of his candid editorials and his wit. He founded the Missoula County Times in 1931 and served as its editor and publisher until Jan. 2, 1958.

He was born Dec. 17, 1892, in Michigan, N.D., and at age 14 began writing for the family-owned Adams Budget in North Dakota. He subsequently published weeklies in Michigan, N.D., and Dunn Center, N.D., then entered the Army in World War I. He served for 18 months in France and in the Army of Occupation in Germany, part of the time in the ambulance service.

Before establishing the Missoula County Times Nov. 13, 1931, Mr. Doherty owned the Winnett Times, which he acquired in 1920 and sold in September, 1931. He later shortened the name of the Missoula weekly to The Times.

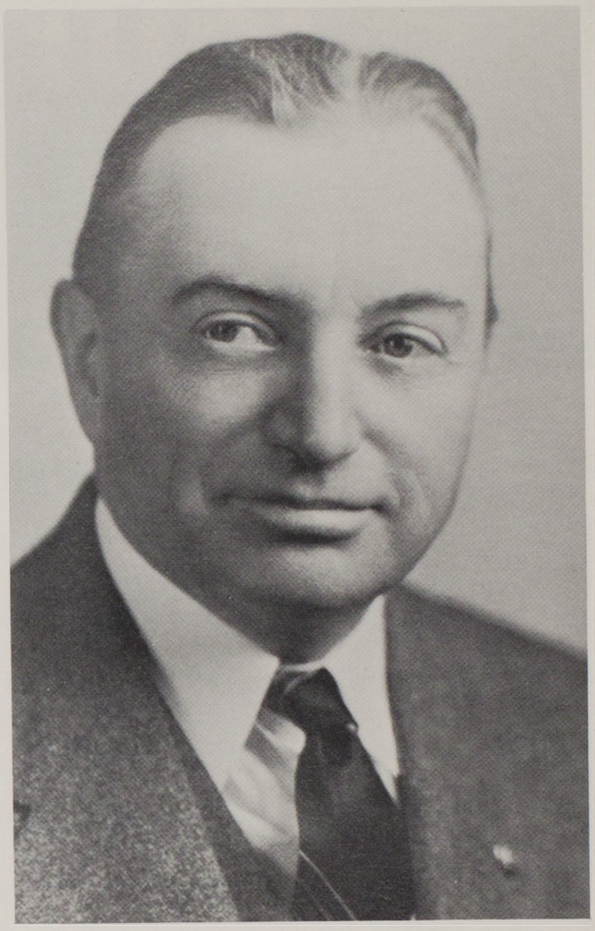
Mr. Doherty participated in many professional and community activities. He served as president of the Montana Press Association and as president of the Western Montana Press-Radio Club.

His unequivocal statements on public controversies and problems and his incisive language were admired by editors throughout the state. On one occasion, for example, he questioned the "mental faculties" of an elected official who he thought had violated a Montana law. Readers rarely wondered where Mr. Doherty stood on major city, county or state issues.

He was a vigorous participant in activities of the Montana Press Association and often expressed a genuine concern about how the organization could best serve the state's publishers. He addressed himself to that subject in an article in the October, 1943, issue of the Montana Press Bulletin.

Mr. Doherty sold the Times in 1958 to Walter Larson and Floyd G. Booth and announced his retirement. He commented in a valedictory editorial: "I am not retiring from the business because I want to. It was more than I had the horse power to handle. . . . The business needs men with the kind of drive and ambition I had when I was young. Not men looking forward to coffee breaks; not men watching the clock. Men willing to work for a future."

He died five months later—May 22, 1958—at age 65 at his home in Missoula.



Charles J. Doherty

1892-1958

Fifteenth Member

Installed April 30, 1970

The Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame, established Aug. 16, 1958, is sponsored jointly by the Montana Press Association and the Montana School of Journalism. A committee comprising six members of the Press Association and the dean of the School of Journalism recommends to the Association one person for the Hall of Fame each year. A candidate may be nominated five years after his death.

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Warren J. Brier, Editor

DEAN A. L. STONE ADDRESS: MUMBLING IN NEVER-NEVER LAND

By *IRA B. HARKEY JR.*

Mr. Harkey, who won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 1963, is author of The Smell of Burning Crosses, *a book based on his experiences as editor and publisher of the Pascagoula (Miss.)* Chronicle *from 1949 to 1964. In 1963 he also received the Sidney Hillman Foundation Award, the Sigma Delta Chi Award for distinguished public service in newspaper journalism and the Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He worked as a reporter and feature writer for the New Orleans* Times-Picayune *from 1939 to 1942 and 1946 to 1949. Mr. Harkey holds a B.A. from Tulane, where he was a Phi Beta Kappa, and an M.A. from Ohio State University, where he taught journalism in 1965-66. In 1968-69 he served as the Carnegie Visiting Professor of Journalism at the University of Alaska. This article contains portions of an address by Mr. Harkey, the 1970 professional lecturer at the Montana School of Journalism, April 30 at the 14th annual banquet honoring the memory of the first dean of the journalism school. The author wishes to thank Prof. Paul Barton of Indiana University and Prof. Robert C. McGiffert of the University of Montana for their comments on the first draft of his speech.*

What I am about to do, I suppose, is proclaim my ascension to fogeydom. For I am going to begin by recalling the good old days when I started in newspapering. Then I am going to deplore the bad new days of journalism as it is practiced now. I want to talk about the degeneration of the language—did you know that the new journalese is broken English?—then talk about the displacement of the real world by a sort of cuckooland that exists only in the minds of some reporters and editors.

When I went to work for a city newspaper in the 1930s, I was a junior in college. Among newspapermen of that day, college was an editorial word signifying a place of detention for privileged wastrels who, if they were graduated, could not afterward be shaped into usable newsmen. The rule: Newspapering can be learned only in the city room, not in the classroom.

Newspapermen in those days, however, college or no, seemed to be masters of the language. I took 24 hours in English in college, but I learned more about grammar and precision of diction from the "roughnecks" who chopped my first year's copy than I learned at school. Middle-aged persons well remember newsmen of this sort, gruff champions of the mother tongue. They were proud of their calling (although their peculiar psychic composition would not allow them to articulate their pride), they respected the language, they loved it, really, and they despised anyone so ignorant as to debase it. The young person who could not learn that respect and achieve that love remained on the small-town weekly or, if he had started on a city paper, ended up clipping items in the morgue or compiling vitals such as ship arrivals and departures.

Now, it seems, the marginal people who once would have been morgue clippers and ship schedulers have been promoted to reporters and editors on papers all over the country and to correspondents, editors and bureau chiefs for wire services all over the world.

Much of newspaper writing no longer says what its writers intended to say. I do not object to changes in word meanings or even to changes in parts of speech, like what has happened to like. The language is part of the fluxing social organism, and meanings change to suit the spirit of the times and the needs of the hour. But I do object to grammatical lapses so flagrant that they produce writing that is as imprecise as adolescent speech in which pronouns have no discernible antecedents, figures ludicrously evoke the opposite of what the writer intends and words widely miss their target meanings. Words can be precise. William Zinsser, speaking of writers, has said, "Like any craftsman,

we enjoy using exact tools and hate to see them maltreated." If we do not know and respect the basic rules of our instrument, if we cannot arrange words in an order that makes dictional sense, if we cannot choose words that rather more than less precisely transmit our meaning, then sooner rather than later faith in our credibility, already impaired, may just about disappear. Precise use of words is the beginning skill for journalists, as striking the precise notes is for musicians. If the artist cannot play the scales and hits klinkers even in Chopsticks, who is going to stay for the concert?

What has happened to the written word? Who has allowed this garbling to come about? I believe that negligent educators have allowed it to happen and that advertising, radio, television, the movies, the magazines, the newspapers —all the mechanisms of mass communications—have contributed. I absolve billboards. We journalism teachers generally get young people after the adolescent mumble has been confirmed, and the best that can be said for us is that we do not make it any worse. English departments abdicated their responsibility for teaching written expression and long ago became departments of literature. Any English professor who announces a desire to teach writing is tagged a quaint lunatic or one who is confessing a weak motivation toward scholarship.

Education often no longer consists of the handing down of precepts, knowledge and wisdom, the elder to the younger. A large part of college education has become a bull session—participatory education—and maybe this is because young people now are suckled on television, which is talk, talk, talk, rather than on books. McLuhan has said that written words are passé, although he keeps on writing more and probably will be the man who wrings a dollar out of that last one set in type.

handfuls of water

Billions of gallons of drivel have been pumped out in the name of the social sciences. There are whole books that contain only truisms and trying to extract a hard, rememberable fact from them is as tantalizingly futile as trying to grab a handful of water. The minds of many students seem geared only for babbling bits and snatches of jargon, social science jargon which, Admiral Rickover says, "no relatively sane man can understand." I have sat in doctoral seminars and listened to young scholars string together trains of meaningless catchwords—the same catchwords for all situations—unmonitored by silent professors who knew that nobody gave a damn what they thought, if anything. Two of every five words in student speech seem to be "you know." The you-know affliction is crippling spoken communications and may be one of the barriers that prevent transposition of ideas from the mind to paper. *Catchword you know grunt I mean you know belch catchword you know.* This academegab sounds learned when spoken by earnest students in Bull Session 896.

Order, discipline, form—these rank with the ROTC as campus villains. Too many of the brightest students go about emitting cries of, "I'm creative!" They refuse to be guided, inhibited they think, by discipline. Their writing is cryptic scribbling that is the visual model of their meaningless classroom prattle. It is so easy to be productive when you are unencumbered by rules and standards. And look at the payoff! We live in an age that mines and merchandises nontalent. The noises of the drunken or the drugged, or the deranged or cretinous or hoaxing, command great sums and lure shrieking devotees. In such a world, the paint-smeared ape wallowing about on canvas can be an artist. And the infant babbling *ga-ga poo-poo* as he blows spit bubbles, why he could be a poet.

The job of the journalism teacher and the city editor—who is primarily a teacher—moves toward impossibility. They must take the wildman product of participatory education and try to impose order on his verbal anarchy. I believe that the only common denominator of all good writing is the quality of saying exactly what the writer intended it to say. This is achieved not through creativity and talent but through knowledge of the rules. Talent and creativity may lead us to breaking the rules and violating the standards of language—humorously, powerfully, brilliantly —but if we are to do so and still convey our meaning—still communicate—we first must be masters of the rules we intend to break.

Catherine Drinker Bowen, granting that talent is beyond teaching, says that technique can and should be taught in any art and quotes Degas, "If you own a hundred thousand francs' worth of craftsmanship, spend five sous to buy more." If form was regarded as infinitely desirable by an artist such as Degas, surely our campus creative crowd can afford to pause and consider that Degas might have been right. I have heard Isaac Stern describe a concert by a group of young musicians during which their joy was so evident it was almost visible—and so was the joy of the audience. "This was a *happening*," Stern said. "The only true happening comes from discipline. If you have a discipline, then you can be free. This is joy." Rollo May has written that "creativity is the result of a struggle between vitality and form," and, "It is the nature of creativity to need form for its creative power; the impediment then has a positive function." I agree. True art is a triumph over its conventions. If you believe yourself to be creative and wish to create something for other than your own private communion, first learn your medium's restrictions, its impediments, its rules. For journalists, they are the rules of our language.

Far too many newspapers do not live in the real world but in a never-never land of their own creation—a land that is as false as the promise in a mouthwash ad. But I am not going to speak about the world of advertising—everybody knows that advertising is only paid lies—but about a spurious page-one world created by some newsmen's failure to look beneath the surface and by the same journalistic compulsion for copycatting that allows the cliché to find everlasting life in newsprint. This newspaper never-never land is a cliché world.

Once upon a time a newspaperman wrote that "The entire city mourned the death today of Soandso," and came pretty close to telling the truth. Ever since, on the death of anyone of political consequence the newspapers tell us that millions have fallen down sobbing. "Nation Mourns Ike's Death," say the headlines, and the stories describe a "pall of sadness" that has "fallen over the nation" because of the ex-President's death. But who mourned and who was sad? A few people, perhaps. His family and friends. The rest of us—the rest of us, that is, who read newspapers and watch television and therefore knew of Eisenhower's death (and how many is that?)—we might have thought, "Well, he was a pretty good man all in all, poor old guy, but life did well by him, giving him long years and many honors." This is respectful but it is not mourning.

> Los Angeles (UPI)—The people of America, from the sidewalks of New York and Chicago to a glittering assembly of the high and mighty in Los Angeles, poured out their hearts Wednesday to three Yanks back from the moon.
>
> In a transcontinental tribute unmatched in the nation's history of salutes to its long line of heroes, Neil A. Armstrong, Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. and Michael Collins were obviously moved to find out what their countrymen think of them.

There is a full column more of this, but these two paragraphs contain more baloney than we have time to slice tonight. From the bottom up, let's question the nonfacts presented. How, without knowing the idiosyncratic reactions of each of the three astronauts, could the reporter know they were "moved"? And how, if they were moved, could he know it was not caused by too much coffee, say, or gas pains? Were all transcontinental tributes to heroes researched and was it truly discovered that this one was unmatched? Female entertainers and other articles of conspicuous consumption such as sleazy politicians could be said to glitter—if you care to use the cliché—but only in never-never land are they regarded as components of "the high and mighty." Surely I could not have been alone in not pouring out my heart to Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins.

facts not printed

You have read the press on "death in the skies."

Q—Drunks in little bitty airplanes are flapping around ramming into airliners and killing hundreds of people, right?

A—Wrong.

Q—But the AP story said the DC9 was "struck in the rear by a private plane," and the UPI story said the DC9 "crashed when a small plane struck its tail section." Surely stories bearing the AP and UPI logos would not so irresponsibly make false statements on their own authority about so serious a matter.

A—They were so irresponsible and the stories did make such false statements without attribution. Of the five private plane-airliner collisions in the 30 months ending last fall, the private plane might have been at fault in only one and in only one might it have struck the airliner. In some of the collisions the airline pilots failed to observe all aviation regulations. In no case was the private plane violating regulations. In one case, the pilot of the airliner was warned several times about a target in his path, yet he continued chatting with his copilot until he ran over a small plane and killed its three occupants. The general public has not learned these facts from its newspapers and believes that small plane and the others "crashed into" the transports.

Probably the worst offenders in maintaining this phony world are sports writers, to whom everything in existence must be the biggest, smallest, longest, shortest, highest, lowest or other superlative. We read of the "world champion" football team and the "world champion" baseball team and the "national collegiate champion" football team. These are publicity words—there are no such champions—yet they gain not only currency but absolute existence through repetition in the sports pages. The height of absurdity I have seen was identification of a marching band as the "world champion drum and bugle corps." In Fairbanks, Alaska, last summer one Joe Kasak of Utkiakvik leaped and kicked a sealskin pouch hanging 6 feet 10 inches above the floor. Kasak kicked a higher pouch—as some sportswriters would write—than anybody else. Is he the world champion sealskin-pouch kicker? Who knows? But I will bet somewhere a sportswriter called him world's champ.

Many sports stories are merely unlabeled advertising for sports enterprises and we know what advertising is. Page one also has become a fairyland, where the reader finds the United States as the best, the bravest, holding a corner on the world's ingenuity, honesty, efficiency and altruism, a superlative Galahad, when in reality it ranks below other nations in many indicators of social values.

After Ted Kennedy's television special entitled "My Most Recent Version of the Occurrence at Chappaquiddick Bridge," an Associated Press story reported that "Sen. Edward M. Kennedy has put his fabled political future [check the meaning of fabled] on the line." Not true. That is not what Kennedy did on the show. That is what he implied he was doing, but that is all. He said he would leave his future to the voters of Massachusetts, but he did not say when, where or how he would do this. He left the situation right where it was before the television production; his future was no more "on the line" after than it had been before. But our newspapers did not tell us that. They gave us Kennedy's sophistry as fact.

We read during the last presidential campaign that "Gen. Curtis LeMay left today on a fact-finding tour of Vietnam." He did not. He left on a trip to get some page-one publicity for the candidacy of his fuhrer, George Wallace. But instead of reporting that LeMay left on *what he said was* a fact-finding trip, newspapers legitimized the publicity excursion by presenting the fiction as fact. I checked the papers for a while after LeMay began his trip, but I did not read that he had uncovered a fact or, if he had, that he had

brought it home to George. Many newspapers no longer qualify stories but report as fact what in truth are only claims. This fault used to have a name—going beyond the facts known to the reporter.

the fortas incident

The well-remembered $20,000 check paid to Supreme Court Associate Justice Abe Fortas by Louis Wolfson was returned to Wolfson, was it not? I do not know. Fortas was quoted as saying he returned the $20,000 and the word "returned" is a subtle and crucial element in his contention that the dealings were honorable. Every newspaper that I saw—even the best of them, the *Wall Street Journal*—said on its own authority that Fortas returned the fee. But how could he have returned it? Only if he had sat there, check in hand, for 10 months, pondering the propriety of the Wolfson association, then had sent the check to Wolfson. This is the Fortas-serving picture that the word "returned" draws for us, and it is of course absurd. If the check was cashed or deposited and cleared, it never could have been "returned." Twenty-thousand dollars may have been paid back to Wolfson by Fortas, but $20,000 was not returned 10 months later. Or was it? Looking to the difference between "returned" and "paid back" is not pedantry. Finding out which words truly applied was the job of the press, which it did not do so far as I saw.

On the awful night when Martin Luther King was murdered, a wire service religion editor wrote that leaders of the white community in Memphis were shocked and grieved that the murder had happened in their city. False. The editor might have discovered one or two whites whom he thought to be leaders and who told him they were shocked. But most white leaders in Memphis and everywhere else in the deep South were too busy to grieve after King was cut down; they were out dancing in the streets, just as they whooped and leaped for joy when John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy were murdered. All Southerners, white and black, know that.

The genius, the ethos of our people—the American cultural configuration—is believed to be, what? God fearing? Peace loving? Loyal, brave, true? Clean? Champion of the underdog? *World's* champion of the underdog? Yet we, inventors of the self-determination of nations, invaded a tiny country in Asia and for years our newspapers boasted daily that we had killed 43, 116, but somedays unfortunately only 12, of "the enemy," also called "Communists." How does the Associated Press know they are Communists? Is there some new public-opinion-survey technique for polling corpses? And whose enemy is this? President Nixon's and, to be sure, Lyndon Johnson's. And the U.S. Army's, Bob Hope's—Hope is in show business partnership with the armed forces—and John Wayne's—Wayne is probably the most ferocious warrior who ever stayed home from wars—and, obviously, the enemy of the Associated Press and the UPI, because they daily call them enemy. But they are not *my* enemy, and I deny it every day when the AP, the UPI, NBC, CBS and my newspaper tell me they are. They are not my enemy, those humans whose daily demise is tallied in our newspapers like pork bellies moved on the Chicago market.

And alongside this daily "enemy" bag of troops we have wiped out or otherwise terminated with extreme prejudice in their homeland, we find the daily story about one dead in highway crash, mother burned to death as fire hits apartment, stickup man nets $2,000 in loan-shop robbery, student nabbed on marijuana charge. Half of page one seems to offer stories that have been there since Mergenthaler.

But who cares about this piddling page-one repetition at a time when we have so polluted the environment that our world may end not with a bang or a sigh but a retch; when our nation has matured into the bullyboy of the earth; when the color line has grown so indelible that a black against white showdown approaches and, perhaps, a world-wide race against race confrontation; when the sexual decathlon has replaced baseball as the national pastime and become our leading spectator sport?

Well, this piddling repetition also is evidence of a witless press at work creating and maintaining its never-never land and setting up the public for cultural lacerations. After years of reading about the miracles through which we would be the first to send a man-made moon into orbit, we woke up one morning to sputnik spinning; smug in our knowledge that no nation on earth can measure up to us socially, we learned that we trail many others in infant mortality rates and welfare programs and that people can die of starvation on the fruited plain; police dogs attack black children in the South and we learned a hundred years after Appomattox that this is not the home of the free; ghettos erupt and we learned that all the descendants of Simon Legree are not living below Mason-Dixon; automobiles come apart and poison is packaged for market shelves—under short-weight labels at that—and we discovered inaccuracies in our public-benefactor picture of business and industry leaders; 35,000 American men and uncountable thousands of Indo-Chinese died before we found out too late that we were not defending freedom and Mom 10,000 miles away; and it was Rap Brown—a philosopher from the gutter, not the editorial page—who brought home to us an interesting kernel of our character that we tend to hide—that violence is as American as cherry pie.

Our mumbling bright young people may have rocks in their mouths, but the brightest do not have rocks in their heads. They should be able to recognize opportunity in the geography of never-never land. Someone is needed to lead newspapers down from the big rock candy mountain and to aim them at telling the truth. The American newspaper reader deserves to be told that there really isn't a lemonade spring. God knows any man can understand the impulse of young people to throw up their hands and walk away from this mess. Here's hoping that there are sufficient of them with self respect enough not to lose by default to the establishment, who will instead through journalism assault it and bend it and try to beat it. You want to tell it like it is? You know a better place?

A NEWSMAN'S VIEW: WRITING WITH PRECISION

By *HOWARD C. HEYN*

Mr. Heyn, a newsman since 1929, worked as a reporter and editor for several daily newspapers before joining the Associated Press in 1942. He has served with the AP bureaus in San Francisco and Los Angeles as a rewriteman, cable editor, AP World correspondent and AP Newsfeatures writer, and for several years he was night editor in Los Angeles. From 1958 to 1960 he was on special assignment with the AP Writing Committee, studying AP writing quality and helping prepare the Associated Press Writing Handbook. *In 1968 he was moved to AP headquarters in New York to work on Book Division projects, including a new edition of* The Associated Press Reference Book. *In August, 1969, he was named editor and supervisor of the Book Division of AP Newsfeatures. He is coauthor of the textbook* Writing for Newspapers and News Services, *published in 1969 by Funk & Wagnalls. This article is based on a speech by Mr. Heyn at the first annual Seminar for Montana Newsmen May 10, 1969, at the School of Journalism.*

Sometimes it seems to me that English is a hundred languages, a complex babble of tongues for specialized audiences. The physicist speaks to other physicists, the doctor of medicine consults with other doctors, the lawyer talks to judges and other lawyers. They understand one another. So do businessmen, through the medium of dollars and cents. There is restricted communication in the realm of the arts. Public officials speak governmentese, but there is some doubt if they even understand each other.

This necessary conditioning of the expert is fine, as far as it goes. But it has its hazards. The specialist may discover that when he steps out of his group he has trouble making himself intelligible. The greatest of our civil-rights leaders have learned that they can't always get through to others of their own race.

What it all boils down to is the problem of saying, in speech or in writing, precisely what one means to convey, whoever his audience may be. After 40 years of working with words, I have concluded that those who can't do this have failed somewhere along the educational line to acquire a thorough understanding of the simple sentence and a sound training in the process of putting its elements together.

If you assume from the foregoing that I have exempted news media from the charge of non-communication, please stand corrected. Many newsmen also have trouble saying what they mean, and with them the sin is even greater because they are supposed to be trained writers. I can attest that every crop of journalism graduates looking for jobs includes a surprising number who lack a solid foundation of grammar and syntax. They are a minority, perhaps, but they are still too numerous. Worried university professors are facing the necessity of doing on the highest educational level what some junior high schools failed to do. The Copley Press is only one of several large newspaper organizations that have, probably in desperation, instituted retraining programs.

In Washington, D.C., two weeks ago I read in the *Post* that at Douglass Junior High School in the suburb of Anacostia—certainly not an underprivileged area—seventh graders study grammar for only half a year owing to a critical shortage of textbooks. Half a year simply is not long enough. A mathematics teacher in the same school was issued 40 textbooks for 49 pupils. She fared far better than most, but she soon threw up her hands and now teaches without any textbooks—to give all the students an equal break. No wonder retraining is necessary.

Even the police may have to do the same thing. A few weeks ago in New York, a Negro police lieutenant petitioned for a hearing of his charge that he was discriminated against in a Civil Service examination for promotion to captain. He claimed the test was biased because 12 of its

135 questions involved the general subject of grammar.

This lieutenant contended grammar was of "limited relevance" to the duties of a police captain and that he was competitively disadvantaged because he had been educated in "confined ghetto schools."

Well, police captain is quite a high rank, just below that of inspector or deputy inspector. Officers of that rating assuredly work with educated civilians as well as the upper echelon of municipal officialdom, though a knowledge of basic grammar may not be related directly to the routine duties of a cop fighting crime.

But the real point here is, why was he disadvantaged by being educated in a ghetto? The teachers there are certified, as they are in more privileged neighborhoods. How did they qualify for certificates if they didn't know—and didn't know how to teach—basic grammar?

We come right back to the broad subject of general communication, the first element of which is: The correct simple sentence is the communicator's best assurance that his audience will get his message.

Matt Weinstock's column in the *Los Angeles Times* carried this sentence from one of the sports pages there:

> Willie Mays was the first of the Giants to start playing catch on the sidelines, watching manager Herman Franks talk to reporters out of the corner of his eye.

That is a unique way to talk, and one of doubtful communications value. The reader who sent the sentence to Weinstock offered the comment: "This is even more unusual than being shot in the fracas."

Because this freakish construction was conceived by a professional reporter, though he may have been a hurried and harried reporter, it is particularly significant to the subject we are going to discuss: How—and how not—to make your own sentences, including leads.

Why anyone would aspire to write professionally without a knowledge of the fundamentals is hard to understand. But it happens.

barriers to communication

There are many barriers to true communication between the writer and the reader. Sooner or later every reporter encounters one of these barriers. I would list about a dozen for sentences in general and a few more for leads in particular.

The first, and gravest, involves factual accuracy. Phrased inexpertly or pretentiously, facts can have the effect of lies, or half-truths, as the Willie Mays item illustrates. They can misinform by confusion, just as they can non-inform by omission. Writers should not be guilty of this. But sometimes writers are. That is why every writer needs an editor.

Here are some details that are technically accurate, yet the context in which they are used creates a distorted picture. They are taken from a spot news story on the Sirhan Sirhan trial and they refer to a deputy district attorney:

> Compton, 47, with brush-cut hair and the thick-set body of a former UCLA football guard gone to flab, needs only a pair of red galluses to complete a brilliantly etched image of uncomplicated, commonsensical small town Americana.

This was not a personality sketch or a feature interview. It was a report of a highly qualified public prosecutor hard at work on serious business before a court determining the fate of an accused assassin. In that setting such facts, although they may be academically correct, do not reflect the truth. They are one young lady's opinion, and they come close to holding counselor Compton up to ridicule.

The next paragraph goes even further, and in its windup one hears the definite ring of editorializing: "He says 'gimme and lemme' and he says 'set' for 'sat.' He doesn't say 'ah, shucks' but he often seems on the verge of saying it in a soft western drawl that suggests he got his law education leaning over ranch fences talking to wise country judges." This isn't even technically accurate, but if it were it still would stand as unjustifiably derogatory in the sneering way it was used.

As for that adjective made from a noun, I leave this to your own "commonsensical" judgment.

A story about a man backing his car out of a driveway carried this deceptive—and dangerous—lead:

> A Gardena truck driver killed his father-in-law today, then surrendered to police.

Accuracy is an obvious requirement which, in most cases, the writer does his best to follow. Most infractions are accidental ambiguities. One common inaccuracy is the sentence that goes beyond the facts—or fails, for the sake of brevity, to include enough of them:

> A San Bernardino bankruptcy referee, Wilson was acquitted of embezzlement after a federal court trial.

In this case it happens that three counts of embezzlement were charged. The jury's verdict was not guilty on two. But jurors disagreed on the third count, which was not dismissed. This means a retrial. Because innocence has not been established on the third count, the story's sentence is misleading.

General wordiness is a famous barrier. This fault takes three forms: Loose construction, redundancy and needless detail. This sentence is loose:

> The police officer accompanied the two to Utah last week inasmuch as it was felt that young Marvin could be of use in helping to locate or identify the killer.

Just what is the message of this 30-word sentence? No more than this:

> The policeman took them to Utah last week, hoping Marvin could locate the killer. (14 words)

Redundancy occurs by the word, by the phrase, by the sentence—and sometimes by the yard. Example:

> Former Governor Goodwin J. Knight and his wife arrived Wednesday with no plans except for a little golf and a lot of relaxation.
> "I haven't any plans," Knight told a news conference. "I just want to take a rest for about a month and play some golf."

I'm sure we are thoroughly familiar with such obvious examples as "about several months old," "continued on" and "short snub-nosed revolver."

Choice of detail is a matter of judgment. Your judgment depends on your audience. For a smaller paper you will retain more detail in a local story than you would in writing the same piece for an AP or UPI wire. For instance:

> The car collided with a Bureau of Land Management fire truck at the intersection of Johnston Road and Townsend Avenue, eight miles southeast of town, at 3:23 p.m.

For a wire service this would become:

> The car and a fire truck collided eight miles southeast of Mimsville.

wordiness induces obscurity

Wordiness is a prime cause of the long, cluttered sentence, a barrier that induces obscurity and complexity because it usually is composed of poorly aligned clauses and phrases. Even when it is clear it feeds the reader too much at once. Here is one guaranteed to discourage readers in Washington, Kentucky, Arkansas—and everywhere else:

> A demonstration in front of a desegregated Kentucky school was broken up by police Wednesday on the eve of the U.S. Supreme Court's momentous special session on the speed of integration at Little Rock High School.

Another:

> Bob Lemon entered the game in the third inning to hit a single between a walk and a groundout that provided the Tribe's only run it scored off Johnny Kuchs until the final inning when Rocky Colavito smashed his eleventh home run of the season after Mickey Vernon's single.

Sports writers are among the worst offenders in trying to say everything at once in this kind of involved sentence, jammed with detail. For example:

> The second-place San Francisco Giants took advantage of a ninth-inning error in the first game and a gilt-edged pitching performance by righthander Ruben Gomez in the second as they beat the Philadelphia Phillies 3-2 and 2-1 tonight to move within one percentage point of the National League lead. (51 words)

The reader gets a chance to find out what happened when the message is broken into two sentences:

> Second-place San Francisco beat Philadelphia 3-2 and 2-1 tonight to move within one percentage point of the National League lead. (21 words)
> A ninth-inning error gave the Giants the first game and gilt-edged pitching by Ruben Gomez won the second.

The reporter who wrote the following souped-up sentence undoubtedly was proud of it, and it is too bad that it had to end on a note of obscurity. It is taken from a story about the Queens College sit-in in New York City:

> Student militants played their alienated role; concerned faculty pondered long the cosmic meaning of all the activity, and poised administrators said things to each side that was designed to hold the dike.

Here we have a grammatical error—"was" for "were"—if the reference was to the things said by the administrators, or we have an ambiguity if the reference was to the design or organization of the two sides in the controversy, for the mutual purpose of holding the dike. The reader is left unable to determine which reference was intended because the writer's highfalutin words add up to confusion.

Such writing is akin to the barrier known as pretentious phrasing, guaranteed to scare the reader away from the story. For example:

> National Association for Advancement of Colored People attorneys told the Supreme Court today that overt public resistance is insufficient cause to nullify federal court desegregation orders.

We should warn all prospective reporters to be wary of governmentese and other gobbledegook. There's a lot of this around these days. Here are some clauses and phrases that should have a familiar ring:

> "Since over-all policy was brought into focus. . . ."
> ". . . under mandate to achieve conformity."
> "Sustention of the principle is all the more important. . . ."
> ". . . finalize a program for federally impacted school areas."

In Washington, a farmer's surplus becomes "an overage on his allotment." At Cape Kennedy a broken wire becomes "a remote electronic malfunction." In the words of Ray Crowley, for many years news editor of the AP in Washington, "No true bureaucrat will ever 'put the lights out' when he can possibly 'terminate the illumination.'"

A reporter writing too rapidly will often misplace clauses and phrases. Sometimes he throws a fact or two into the end of a sentence as an afterthought. At least before he turns in his copy the writer should realign such sentences so their components appear in proper sequence. We all can think of examples. Here is an obvious one:

Color and action depend largely on proper choice of words

> An electrical fire in the home of Robert Mingle was extinguished today before any serious damage was done by the Rosedale Fire Department.

Another:

> Kostadinoff was fined $800 and costs last March under a charge of transporting liquor made by Hancock County authorities.

Newsmen are not the only offenders:

> His glass was half empty now: high time to eat. He went into the kitchen and cut a sandwich. He swung a leg over the table and munched it slowly. What a way to dine!

What a way indeed. Almost cannibalistic. Alec Waugh wrote that in the novel *Island in the Sun.*

> It was the more placid summer of the middle states, buxom as a big-bosomed farmer's daughter.

Maybe Struthers Burt, in writing *Along These Streets,* meant to say a farmer's big-bosomed wife's daughter.

One of the most frequently dislocated parts of speech is the principal verb. Watch out for its placement, if you want to avoid this roadblock. An example:

> Mary must take the Pasteur treatment unless the black dog that bit her while she fed birds in the meadow behind her grandmother's farmhouse twelve miles south of here is found by the Health Department.

To bring subject and predicate within gunshot of one another, we relocate the main verb and get this:

> Mary must take the Pasteur treatment unless authorities can find the dog that bit her while she fed birds in the meadow behind her grandmother's farmhouse, twelve miles south of here.

This is clear, but it should have been written as two sentences, the first one ending with "bit her."

the direct sentence: greatest impact

The direct sentence carries the greatest impact. Inverted or backed-into constructions delay the newsworthy facts and sometimes hide the truth. This can result from setting the scene before saying what happened:

> Two firemen fought their way into the smoke-filled building where a boy was trapped on the second floor and died of asphyxiation.

It is impossible to tell who died unless we convert the phrasing to a direct approach, in this manner:

> Two firemen were asphyxiated while trying to rescue a boy trapped on the second floor of the smoke-filled building.

Inversion of this sort is what Roy Copperud calls "linguistic smog." It is not always a matter of syntax but rather a matter of emphasis. The first thing the reader wants to know is what happened. Participial phrasing often induces inversion:

> Smashing into the Redondo breakwater just offshore in a blinding fog, the super-tanker broke in two and sank within minutes.

The main thing that happened is delayed until the end. The cure: Merely turn the sentence around.

Use of the participle at the beginning of the sentence, by the way, also can be dangerous. And when it produces a dangling modifier the result is ludicrous:

> Ailing in recent years, Smith's literary output dropped to almost nothing in 1963.

Possibly Smith's writing was sick, but I doubt if the reporter intended to say so.

Color and action depend largely on proper choice of words. The difference between adequate and outstanding writing can be illustrated this way:

> Rafael Trujillo Jr. failed to graduate today from the U.S. Army Command College, but he became Commander-in-Chief of the Dominican Republic anyway.

The news is there, along with interest created by contrast. The sentence is correct, clear and relatively brief. But in a succeeding cycle a rewrite man came up with this revision:

> General Rafael Trujillo Jr. learned alternately in a matter of moments today that he had flunked in school and succeeded in life.

By the same token, poor choice of words can make a sentence ridiculous. A sports colloquialism is responsible in this case:

> Howard Chandler Christy, the noted illustrator, took 52 mackerel fishing today aboard the Viking II with Captain Forsberg out of Freesport.

Inept choice of words not only can create an awkward sentence but also can change the meaning. A story on the art page of a metropolitan newspaper contained this paragraph:

> The county museum's calendar of events says the exhibit of American sculpture of the sixties will be conducted April 28 through June 25. 167 works will be displayed by eighty American sculptors, all executed since 1960.

"Completed" would have been a wiser choice than "executed."

Hanson W. Baldwin, the retired *New York Times* specialist, inadvertently made himself appear the most arrogant of Harvardites when he wrote this:

> Saito is an old man (seventy five), a Yale alumnus, but nevertheless has a clear mind and is concise and direct.

Erle Stanley Gardner in *Murder Up My Sleeve* wrote this blooper through unfortunate choice of a noun:

> Malloy's fingers groped for his hat brim, removed it. "Glad to know you," he said.

Another:

> Miss Mamakos was revived by the fire department rescue squad but was otherwise uninjured.

A completely antithetical notion of a word's meaning "got in the way of communication" with the reader in this sentence:

> Semantics got in the way of communication during the special meeting of the unified school board Tuesday.

The important element of attribution, while not necessarily related to syntax, is directly involved in phrasing sentences for news stories. Is the occurrence or statement innocuous, or does it embody the potential of libel? Quite obviously most sentences are more graceful and easier to write without attribution. We have to live with this restriction, but we don't have to go overboard. Excess attribution is a very definite communications barrier:

> The Corpus Christi Caller-Times says tonight it has been informed that Lieutenant Lee Miller of the Texas Highway Patrol says he has been informed that it has been reported that two of his men have captured John (Jake the Barber) Factor and two of his abductors near Harlingen, Texas.

An absurd example of slavish attribution was provided by an eastern newspaper in handling the lead of a wire service story. On the wire the lead read this way:

> New York (AP)—There are two kinds of snails: male and female.

The newspaper's copydesk removed the dateline and rephrased the sentence this way:

> There are two kinds of snails, male and female, according to the Associated Press.

Proper attribution, by contrast, helps protect the writer, the editor, the newspaper and even the reader, if he happens to be the subject of the story at hand. Many reporters assume they are safe with a lead starting, "Dow Bingel told police today he shot his wife and two daughters to death because. . . ." But if Bingel repudiates a confession, if a court holds that his statement was obtained under duress, if he is deprived of his right to counsel or if he merely claims he was misquoted, such a lead embodies no true attribution whatever. The newspaper, not the police, has taken responsibility for the assertion that Bingel told officers anything at all. The sentence should start: "Police said Dow Bingel told them. . . ." or "Police records quoted Dow Bingel today. . . ." The officer's name and rank will tighten it further. Nearly every reporter has been caught in this trap, and those who have suffered most severely therefrom are the most likely to become superconscious of attribution, even employing it needlessly. No doubt this apprehension has induced a great number of "So and so said" leads. In my opinion Washington wire service writers are the worst offenders. In any case, it is wise to limit the "so and so said" approach to potentially dangerous stories and to those wherein the person making the pronouncement is as important as what he says or more so.

Needless identification lies in the same category, particularly in lead writing. This one is almost all identification and no news:

> Joseph W. Mathews, curriculum director of the Christian Fund and Life Community of Austin, Texas, was the Danforth Religious Seminar speaker at the University of Iowa Tuesday.

The journalistic worship of plenteous quotes is general. But lest they become barriers, direct quotations should be significant, not inane. Not too many years ago one of the nation's presidents in alighting from a plane in a torrential downpour told his welcomers, "Well, I see you're having a little rain today." And the White House correspondents who accompanied him parroted his remark.

Unanswered questions are a major barrier to readability. Perhaps nothing irritates the reader more than the story that omits information he is certain to expect.

A story that got a big play a few years ago reported that three children trapped in an apartment were burned fatally because the only door had been nailed shut. The writer devoted two paragraphs to the exact number and location of the nails and more to the desperate efforts of firemen

to remove them. But nowhere was the reader told why or by whom the doorway was nailed up.

Another example of this kind of "mystery writing" was a story about a sheriff who trapped a burglar by using a camera equipped with infrared film and flash bulb. Unfortunately, the story did not say that an infrared flash is invisible to the naked eye, a fact unknown to hundreds of thousands of readers.

unanswered questions

One of those holiday sob stories welcomed by news services related that kind neighbors got together and bought a bicycle as a Christmas present for the crippled son of a poor family. Could he ride it? Would he ever be able to ride it? No reader ever found out.

Another story stated that, because of an impending strike by television actors, several programs were being prerecorded. It didn't state how these actors were persuaded to serve as strikebreakers in advance.

Most of these obstacles to clear, concise, direct, accurate, readable, informative and libel-safe writing are doubly amplified when they appear in the lead. The lead is the newspaperman's showcase. It must capture the reader as well as inform him, enabling him to learn quickly what the news is about, inspiring him to go deeper into the story.

If the news does not appeal to him, he probably will not read on, however well written the rest of the story may be. News service writers must be extra careful in this respect because their leads must sell the story first to the telegraph editors and give them the foundations for their headlines.

Although the trend in recent years seems to be more favorable, there is still almost daily evidence that leads aren't as good as they should be. Too many are long, complicated or otherwise awkward. Too many, in a rather desperate effort to trap the reader, are misleading or inappropriate to the subject matter. Some fail to reflect the most important angle of the story.

It should be mandatory that the reporter demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the essentials that epitomize good leads, particularly those of stories embodying spot news.

I would say that the good lead must, first, be informative. A newsworthy lead is certainly not a mere clutter of words vaguely related to the occurrence. Accuracy, of course, is inherent in the informative lead because its message must be true. All of us have seen this variety:

> The nation's weather pattern showed minor changes today.

This isn't entirely a lie, but it isn't the truth either. It doesn't even tell us if the weather was good or bad. But the body of the story tells about severe thunderstorms, hail and damaging high winds. Equally noninformative is this:

> Archbishop Karl J. Alter of Cincinnati tonight formally opened the 19th North American Liturgical Week.

However significant the news may be, brevity in the lead always is a recommendation. It is difficult, and manifestly unfair, to ascribe any precise limit of length, but it is certainly safe to stay within 30 words—about three typewritten lines. Excellent five and six-line intros turn up occasionally.

Obviously we should not try to tell the entire story in one sentence. When we speak of the brief or quick lead we mean that nothing in the sentence delays or hides the chief newsworthy fact. Other major facts may follow, in a second or even third sentence. Now and then, in complex situations, a good summary lead will comprise three short paragraphs. And some of the worst will crowd all the news angles into the first sentence.

One error attributable to this cramming of the lead is the sudden change of tense, illustrated by the following:

> A self-styled Brooklyn bishop who has been variously charged in the past with kidnap, rape and beating up a woman who threatened to leave his flock is being held in $20,000 bail today when he was arraigned on an indictment charging kidnap, assault and menacing.

The forms of the principal verbs in this sentence are "has been charged," "is being held" and "was arraigned." I imagine its author fell into the verbal trap by choosing that word "when" instead of "after" to introduce the clause on the arraignment. Even so he would have been in error, no doubt because of the length of the sentence.

He could have adhered to the simple past tense throughout:

> A self-styled Brooklyn bishop charged in the past with kidnap, rape and beating up a woman who threatened to leave his flock was held in $20,000 bail today after he was arraigned on an indictment. . . .

Better yet, he could have saved the arraignment, bail and some of that dependent clause detail for later sentences.

One thing that has puzzled me for years is what's wrong with leads comprised of more than one sentence or more than one paragraph? I don't know. I don't think anything is wrong with them. Yet we see relatively few compared with the excessive number of long, cluttered, breath-taking single sentences that try to say everything at once.

The following sentence not only endeavors to do this, but also breeds confusion by mixing two different sports:

> Dan Orlich, 6-foot-four, 320-pound former Green Bay Packer footballer and current captain of the All-American Trapshooting Team, won the Pacific International Doubles Championship today with 99X100 and then posted 100 straight in the first half of a two-day 200-target singles tourney.

Unmixed, and broken into three sentences, this lead made more sense:

> Dan Orlich, 6-foot-four captain of the All-America

Trapshooting Team, won the Pacific International Doubles Championship today, scoring 99X100.

He then posted 100 straight in the first half of a two-day, 200-target singles tourney.

The 320-pound Orlich is a former Green Bay Packer football player.

Too many words at once can be confusing, even if the sentence is properly and clearly phrased. Almost any long sentence is harder to read than two or three short sentences, sometimes in separate paragraphs.

The following lead is needlessly lengthened by lesser details which could be used later in the story:

A southbound automobile drifted across two of U.S. Highway 11's three lanes in pre-dawn darkness today and collided with a tractor-trailer, killing all four occupants in the car.

As rewritten to put the news first and delay lesser detail the lead read:

Four persons were killed today when their automobile drifted across a highway and collided with an oncoming truck.

If you are worried about getting some color into a brief introduction, a minimum of detail, carefully chosen, can establish a vivid scene, such as this one:

Five boys took one last romp in the Susquehanna River today while their parents prepared to go home from a picnic. Four of them drowned.

In the pursuit of brevity and simplicity, the careful writer must remember to be specific in his lead. Some initial sentences are so general in content that the reader isn't certain what the body of the story is going to offer, and he may very well turn to another page. A lead is sure to be dull if it is no more than an abstraction or label, devoid of any available drama. Here is a nonspecific label:

A disturbance on the East Side today called out police reserves who made 14 arrests.

Deep in the story were these specific details, any of them worthy of a place in the lead: A crowd of 150 persons assembled, plate glass windows of a supermarket were shattered, the store was looted of liquor and cigarettes, four persons were injured by flying glass, the proprietor was critically beaten, a National Guard call-out was narrowly averted.

avoid inactive phrasing

The most effective leads employ the direct and active approach. Nothing removes the punch from a lead more thoroughly than inactive phrasing of the sentence. Consider "A crash today took the lives of three . . ." for "Three persons died . . ." or "The Coast Guard today reported the collision of . . ." for "A yacht and a freighter collided. . . ."

Objectivity is a quality that too many leads lack. For reasons beyond basic accuracy, the beginning of a story should encompass the primary facts though two or more sentences may be necessary. In controversial situations, such as labor disputes, this means the facts on both sides. A lead that states only one point of view may be correct factually, but it remains unbalanced nonetheless and thus fails to inform fully and fairly.

Also nonobjective is the lead that draws a moral conclusion. Both editorializing and philosophizing are activities outside the reporter's province.

These leads are editorial:

Chicago's angry probe into. . . .

A beloved member of the newspaper fraternity. . . .

This lead draws a moral conclusion:

Anthony J. Heyman, 23, of Detroit, has proved that crime does pay—if not very much.

Honest leads need some reference to the time at which a news event took place. The reader has a perfect right to expect this, even if a paper's coverage has been tardy. In the case of aging stories this need not be exact in the lead; it may be merely a matter of the verb form. But somewhere in a later paragraph a candid statement of time—usually yesterday—is good journalism. Unfortunately this responsibility is shirked by many papers in both morning and evening fields.

A certain amount of care is necessary in selecting the place the time element shall occupy in the sentence. It can be obtrusive, even absurd, if misplaced. This is especially true in the current vogue of using the day of the week instead of "today," "yesterday" and "tomorrow," a practice common among papers using teletypesetter tape. For instance:

Tuesday Weld Wednesday signed a contract to make four pictures.

In some papers "today" is sacred and must appear in every lead. Too often this produces an awkward sentence: The writer has phrased it to accommodate "today" instead of telling directly what happened, even if it was yesterday.

Unfortunate placement of the time element can blunt a sharp lead or change its meaning, as in this one:

President Eisenhower brushed aside "whatever difficulties the Soviets may raise" to talks on a nuclear suspension today and sped three scientists to Geneva.

Neither the talks nor the suspension was due that day. The reporter should have written:

President Eisenhower sped three scientists to Geneva today, brushing aside "whatever difficulties the Soviets may raise" to talks on nuclear suspension.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is a stickup."

Needlessly pinpointing the time element merely delays the news. "At an early hour today" means no more than "today" unless pre-dawn darkness is a factor in the occurrence.

Wire service people, writing for all cycles of the day, find it necessary to use the time element for updating. This can be acceptable if it is not carried to an extreme. To freshen the report of an event that took place last night it is common wire service practice to adjust the time element to other facts in some way such as this:

> Police questioned four men today in their search for the killer of a widow whose bludgeoned body was found last night in her modest home.

Almost any lead can be better phrased if the writer will resist forcing into it "today." Telegraph editors like fresh developments in second-day leads, but if there aren't any the alternative is a fresh approach—possibly an angle of the story that was underplayed or omitted in the prior cycle can now be developed. Sometimes this takes only a couple of phone calls.

A device frequently effective in second-day leads is the reaction approach. This is nothing more than comment on what was said or done earlier, but it serves to update the story, as in this example:

> Top Democrats disputed today President Johnson's optimistic view yesterday on the nation's economic position.

Choosing verbs that denote action sharpens a lead, or any other sentence, provided they are selected correctly and appropriately. When Marilyn Monroe toured Korea in 1954, one wire service reporter wrote this lead:

> A long, low whistle echoes across the frozen hills of Korea today as Marilyn Monroe continues her tour in an area where the men outnumber the women 100,000 to nothing.

A lead remembered by some graying editors across the country is this one, by Damon Runyon, for a crew race story:

> The Yale crew arched their backs like eight angry cats and clawed their way to victory yesterday.

An editor might make the noun and the pronoun agree, but he wouldn't change "arched" or "clawed."

Perhaps a word should be said here about situations in which a direct quote is the most succinct or most colorful approach. I have known of many newspapers whose editors frowned on quote leads. Some barred them. This too, like the scarcity of two-sentence leads, has puzzled me, particularly in view of the almost universal respect bestowed on quotes elsewhere in the story. For some reason, I always will read a quote lead, though the headline tells me I'm not interested in the story. And, as a matter of fact, what better attribution for a statement could be found than the exact words of the person who made it? Here is one I have never forgotten:

> "At my age it's a compliment," comedian George Jessel, 63, said today in discussing a charge that he fathered the year-old daughter of a movie starlet just past 23.

Written for a personality profile, here is a quote lead guaranteed to catch the eye of the beholder:

> "I was born in the wrong century," Zsa Zsa Gabor said today. "I would have made a bum out of Madame Pompadour."

In New York a gentlemanly robber entered a bar and said:

> "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is a stickup."

And that's how the Associated Press lead was phrased.

A quote lead frequently can be used for a second-day story, just as reaction comment is employed for purposes of updating.

the question lead

The question lead falls into a category somewhat similar to that of the quote lead. The similarity lies in the fact that neither can be used indiscriminately. With that limitation in mind, both can be attention getters. If the reader feels he absolutely must seek the answer by reading on, the question as a gambit has fulfilled a key part of the lead's mission. Far more effective than a direct reference to reincarnation is this example:

> Are there persons living today who lived another life, in another body—perhaps in some bygone century?

Whether or not you approve the quote or the question technique, it should be quite evident that the lead no longer is a fixed form, slavishly following the old five-W formula. Opinions on the most effective device are legion. In the view of one veteran newsman, for instance, a lead should not be wholly news in content but should contain a teaser as well. This is based on the theory that leads should be written from the reader's, not the reporter's, point of view.

Such an approach is limited by several factors, including the cleverness of the writer and the nature of the situation, as the following examples illustrate:

> Newscaster Ted Meyers was working in a new medium today but his delivery was never better. Meyers had just officiated at the birth of a child.

> Some of the suspenders on the George Washington Bridge have lost their snap and are being replaced.

Even when there was no news, this reporter found a lead:

> Tranquility ran rampant in Elmsford last night. No fires, no accidents, no traffic violations, no wife beatings and no dog bites.

The element of humor, when successful, depends more often on situation than on skill, at least in news writing. Professional newsmen facing deadlines cannot rewrite or polish in the manner of a Thurber or a Benchley. Nothing is sadder than the lead in which the writer has tried, and failed, to be witty or funny. But when situation and skill are there to be called on, the result usually is a bellringer.

When a Florida constable campaigned door to door for re-election, he came on a fight between a saloon keeper and his wife. She had a butcher knife and he had two bottles. So the constable arrested them both. The lead was a natural: It said Constable James Powell went campaigning door to door yesterday and lost a couple of votes.

The late Hugh Baillie of United Press International wrote a memorable lead about a prophet who declared a world revolution would begin on a certain day. When a downpour hit New York City on that day, the disheartened longhair reluctantly announced that the revolution was postponed until the next day. Baillie wrote his lead in a manner befitting the baseball season. It read:

> New York (UP)—Revolution postponed on account of rain. Two revolutions tomorrow.

Occasionally we see a lead certain to inspire, if not a haw-haw, at least a twinkle in the reader's eye. A one-sentence weather forecast in a country newspaper read: "Snow, followed by small boys on sleds."

Years ago, when Preacher Roe pitched the Dodgers to a World Series victory over the Yankees, a now-forgotten sports writer produced this lead:

> Preacher Roe delivered a sermon from the mound yesterday.

The *New York Times* carried this one, almost my favorite:

> The first tenor in a prison quartet led the bass and the baritone to freedom last September, but the FBI has arranged for a return engagement at the Kentucky State Penitentiary.

In the following example the lead was the entire story:

> Guantanamo Bay, Cuba—U.S. Marine sentries today repelled an invasion of this naval base by three scrawny Cuban chickens. They said "Shoo!"

It might be in order that we conclude this presentation by citing two leads, both technically apt, that nonetheless never got into print. One, produced in the Rome Bureau of a wire service that shall remain nameless, involved a youngster run over in traffic. It read:

> Mario Martino raced a steamroller across a street here today. Mario lost.

The other concerned a UCLA professor who borrowed a quarter from a student, then asked how the student could get it back without using force. The student did it by suing the professor in small-claims court.

Thereafter, one local newsman wrote:

> Professor John Richards got his tort caught in a wringer today.

Department of Beautiful Prose

> Like many of the underground papers, its content seemed to have been prepared by people who had never bothered to learn to write with minimum grammatical correctness not to speak of with charm or clarity.
>
> —Penn State Journalist, June, 1969

MASSIVE OVERHAUL REQUIRED: THE DEMISE OF PRESS CREDIBILITY

By *SAM REYNOLDS*

Mr. Reynolds, editorial-page editor of the Missoula (Mont.) Missoulian *since March, 1964, has been a visiting lecturer at the Montana School of Journalism and a frequent guest speaker in journalism classes. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and has a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University and a master's degree in Russian history from Wisconsin. From 1959 to 1964, he was an education and political writer for the* Wisconsin State Journal *at Madison. Mr. Reynolds is author of two other articles in* Montana Journalism Review—*"The Conspiracy Syndrome: Newspapers and Paranoid Readers" in the 1967 issue and "No Fudging in Missoula: A Newspaper Laid Out" in 1968.*

Many people say American society is sick, and I think to some measure that is true. The press has contributed to that sickness, but perhaps of more interest, at least to newspapermen, is the belief that recent turmoil in America has revealed a very real sickness in the press itself. We have lost our most cherished possession—credibility—and no amount of pious intonation about the values of a free press or the sanctity of the First Amendment can obscure that fact.

We have lost credibility with every segment of society. We have lost it among the conservatives, who shook their fists at reporters when a speaker at the 1964 Republican National Convention denounced elements of the press.

We never have had great credibility with the left because, historically, the press has served—and editorially defended—business and industry and conservatism in general.

We have failed to establish credibility among minority groups. Many blacks exclude white reporters from their meetings and deeply suspect every reporter, black or white, who represents a white establishment news organization.

We have lost it among the young. That is the most distressing fact and the best measure of the press' sickness, because today's young are the best reflection of society's troubles, the most valid indicator of where the adult generation has failed. If the press were reaching the young, there would be no underground press and no need for one. The press is not reaching the young. Until it does, the underground press will flourish. Its existence is not just an indication of youth rebellion; it is more an indication of the failure of the elder generations and, specifically, the failure of the press to do its job.

The job, as the young point out, is to tell it like it is and to seek and report the truth, however unpleasant the truth might be. The job is to ferret out problems as they germinate, so they do not spring full-blown on a surprised and aghast public, and to report and interpret those problems in a manner so the public will know what they are and will be able to formulate ideas about how they can be solved.

The job, then, is to tell it like it is, warts and all.

The job of interpretation of the news is not, as some journalists believe, to interpret it in a way that will justify the status quo; instead, it is to serve the cause of basic, honest understanding of what the news means.

The job of editorial criticism is to lead the public, kicking and screaming if need be, to confrontation with the issues as they are and to a rational and effective resolving of those issues.

Until that is done, the American public has no particular reason to trust the integrity of the press. Until that is done, reporters will be excluded from meetings. Until that is done, the underground press will exist as a legitimate embarrassment to the established press.

Some critics say a major weakness of the press is its failure to inform the public about what the press itself is all about. I think that's true, but I also think that if the press tried to explain itself, it would be compelled to face its own failings

and would find it is unable to explain itself honestly.

It would have to reveal the fact that it long ignored an honest grappling with problems such as racial unrest and student resentment against the establishment. It would have to reveal that many newspapers are governed, in editorial and even news policy, by publishers and editors who are generally content with the status quo and flatly resent events that upset it. It would have to reveal that many papers—perhaps most—are directed by publishers and editors who have horizons limited to middle-class, white, business, service-club, chamber-of-commerce values and who simply are unable to comprehend the significance of the unrest seething around them. It would have to reveal poor pay scales for most of the nation's local reporters—scales reflected in poor performances by those reporters.

public sees through puffs

The press, naturally, shies from such embarrassing self-revelation and contents itself with National Newspaper Week explanations about how great and good and necessary and idealistic the press is. Many in the press don't even realize that the public sees through such phony puffs, just as the public eventually sees through all spuriousness.

But even when the press does perform well—and I truly believe that day in and day out it does a remarkably good job on most things—it is misunderstood and resented.

Part of that is natural, because the truth can be unpleasant and when it is reported some people don't like it. It depends on whose ox is gored. Sometimes that's because the truth grates against people's values. The lover of the status quo does not like to learn about black unrest or student rebellion. The taxpayer does not like to be told, even by the most responsible authority, that a solution to a problem will require more money. And a person involved with an unpleasant incident does not like to have it spread before the public. That is true of the drunken driver in the *Missoulian* column "Good Morning, Judge" and it is true of everyone else.

The job of the press is certainly not to distort or sensationalize, but neither is it to suppress or underplay events, however distressing the facts might be to a governmental official, a white middle-class Rotary Club member, a publisher, an editor, a black, a student, a minister or anyone else who might be offended by honest reporting of the facts.

That is a point on which most thoughtful people agree: Tell it like it is, accurately and honestly and completely and in balance, however much it hurts or whoever's sensibilities are offended.

The press has been accused of defending the establishment. I will plead guilty to that charge provided the word establishment embraces a concept of justice, honesty, genuine concern with human problems and devotion to their amicable solution—a concept that embodies my belief in this country.

What distresses me about the press, particularly its editorial pages, is not that it defends the establishment but that it defends only a small segment of the establishment—generally the white, middle-class, contented status quo—and, worse, it defends even that small segment very badly.

Columnists and editorial writers fasten like slugs on untoward incidents and meaningless facts and draw from them head-in-sand conclusions that tend to denigrate those they disapprove of and, by contrast, make the status quo appear to be the fount of all wisdom and virtue.

Editorial writers will heap abuse on black unrest and some of the manifestations it takes, such as the burning of Newark, Detroit or Watts. They will do this never having read a word of James Baldwin, Eldridge Cleaver, Malcolm X or reports by national commissions that have tried responsibly to reveal the root causes of unrest.

If they did their homework, they might better understand not what has happened but why. And they might realize it is their job to lead the status-quo community to an understanding that Olympian disapproval will not make the problems go away, that attitudes must be changed and that actions must be taken to eliminate the causes of the explosions that threaten white, middle-class values.

The best defense of the white, status-quo mentality is for it to understand its adversary and to take those actions that will extract the social poisons that threaten to overturn the status quo. In other words, know your enemy—if enemy you think him to be—respect his strengths, understand how best he can exploit your own weaknesses and, based on knowledge, choose courses of action that will peacefully disarm him. That is the only realistic defense available to the establishment. It will require money, commitment and practical implementation of programs aimed at bringing justice, independence, freedom and opportunity to all Americans—all things to which white, status-quo America has paid fervent lip service.

You can't defend a viewpoint effectively if you fasten on meaningless statistics, like the one that says only 2 per cent of all American college students are genuinely radical and wish to revolutionize the country, and from that pooh-pooh student discontent as insignificant.

That 2 per cent means thousands of people. And 2 per cent can cause havoc. One person can cause 12 fires in 12 minutes by merely igniting and throwing two six-packs of Molotov cocktails. If that happened on the Montana campus, the statistic that the radical firemaker was only 1-7,000th of the student body would be meaningless. It would be like saying that only .09 per cent of all Germans made the decisions necessary to exterminate the Jews, and therefore the whole thing can be shrugged off.

Such statistics are dangerous when used to lull the public into complacency about a serious problem that will not go away without basic understanding and concerted action, or when they deceive the public (as they do), or when they further offend and alienate the students or blacks who have legitimate grievances.

The best defense for the establishment is to tell it like it is so all segments of society, whether they like the news

or not, at least trust its accuracy. It means editorial courage and honesty in using facts, so informed and effective action can be taken to cope with problems.

It means that catering to any segment of society's prejudices must be avoided. The press, in trying to please the establishment, has pleased nobody. It has alienated everybody. It has lost its credibility and is threatened with loss of its independence because it has placed too little value on the principles of telling the bald truth and doing that job independent of all outside pressures. The greatest threat to the press is the weakness and lack of courage of the press itself. Its best defense—its only defense—is to tell it like it is, divorced as fully as possible from the mores and prejudices of any segment or segments of society.

That presents the press with a massive overhaul of its thinking and structure. It had better get cracking on that task or it will not merit the freedoms it claims to hold so dear.

Bohemia in Butte: Montana's First Press Club

For three days Billings has entertained a body of men who bake their bread and churn their butter with typewriter keys—writers all. Writers alone can make a true bohemia. But are these serious faced men dwellers in bohemia's hectic realm? Perish the thought. Bohemia is a nation that has returned to the dust whence it sprang, so far as 1915 newspaper makers are concerned. These men consider for the most part the question: "How can I make my Daily Cyclone a better paper than that thrice accursed Daily Tornado across the street?"

And they don't give a hang if Francois Villon was a gambler and a thief as well as a writer of verse; if Shakespeare did anaesthetic himself with ale every night; if Lord Byron did drink toasts from a skull cap; if Edgar Allan Poe did believe the greatest inspiration comes from filling a straight flush, aces and queens; if Mark Twain did regard unpaid room rent as the smallest of life's troubles; if 'Gene Field did roll bowling balls down three flights of hotel stairs at 3 o'clock in the morning. Yes, bohemia has passed.

But memory remains. That memory, in this instance, is of a bohemia in Montana. There are but four remaining to perpetuate the memory of it. Jean Decker of Billings is one of the four. The present convention of the state editors in Billings has recalled vividly to the pioneer newspaper man the scenes in which the lighthearted, carefree, clever members of Montana's first press club played a part. There is no one better qualified to tell the story of that press club and its members than Jean Decker himself. Mr. Decker has the floor:

"I can't recall whether it was in 1889 or 1890 that the first local press association was formed in Montana, but it was in one of those years, and it was during the summer that the organization was born. It was at Butte, of course, as that town was the only one large enough to afford a sufficient number of writers to form a body of that sort. Although short lived, it was a live number during its brief existence. Like many other good things, the association 'just happened.' It was not, like the state association, the result of any well-defined plan or mature deliberation.

"During those days the seven-day-a-week newspaper was not known in Montana. Six days a week was considered enough to inflict upon the public. Sunday was the 'day off' for everyone connected with the newspaper grind. This gave us a whole day of loafing. The 'gang' were all on good terms; consequently, it was our habit to get together on that day and have as good a time as possible. One of the favorite loafing places was the little back office of the Mining Journal, a weekly publication owned by W. J. Penrose. There almost every Sunday evening the boys would gather, tell stories, smoke, and 'talk shop.' Generous and big-hearted, 'Pen,' as he was affectionately called by everyone, usually managed to have a case of beer to help while away the hours.

"It was at one of these symposiums that the suggestion that we organize and form ourselves into a press club was made. I don't remember just who was elected to fill the different offices, but if my memory is not at fault, John Maguire, genial, lovable, 'old John,' was made president. He was not a newspaperman, but even so, he had few equals and no superiors as a writer and knew practically every newspaperman and newspaper office between the Atlantic and Pacific, and was always a welcome visitor at all of them. He was owner and manager of Maguire's Grand Opera house, besides managing theaters at Helena and Anaconda. John's greatest boast was that he knew personally about every man and woman of prominence in the United States. He was among the very first, if not the first actor to enter the territory of Montana, coming here in the early sixties. It was long before the day of regularly established theaters, and John traveled between the mining camps and army posts, where he gave his famous 'one-man show,' still fondly recalled by many of the old-timers who had the pleasure of hearing and seeing him.

"Gradually it became noised about that Butte had a real press club. As the boys were an extremely popular lot, the Sunday evening meetings began to be marked by donations of boxes of cigars, now and then a case of Pomery, but more often a case of 'Bud' or Pabst. This was better than passing the hat and, incidentally, it gave one of the geniuses composing the membership a happy thought. An honorary list was created. The individual selected for the honor was notified in due form, and always responded as expected—by accepting with thanks and sending an order for refreshments or accompanying the acknowledgement with the goods themselves. As many of the honorary members availed themselves of the privilege carried by their election and attended the meetings, the demands upon the commissary continued to grow. This was followed by a natural sequence—more honorary members were necessary, until gradually every dispensing chemist of standing was taken into the fold.

"Whether because there were no more eligibles to select or whether because of lack of novelty is not clear, but the association began to languish and died as quietly as it had been born.

"As an organization the old Butte press club never acquired fame, but that was not its purpose. The object in view was fully attained—we had lots of fun and some great times."

From the Billings *Journal-Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1915.

A PLEA FOR TOUGH EDITING: THE WOES OF TECHNOLOGY

By *ROBERT C. McGIFFERT*

Professor McGiffert was a reporter and city editor of the Easton (Pa.) Daily Express *for 16 years before he joined the journalism faculty at Ohio State University. He taught there four years, then in 1966 became a member of the Montana journalism faculty. He has worked for the* Washington *(D.C.)* Post *and for five years has served as a consultant to the American Dental Association. He has taught at writing seminars sponsored by the ADA and the American Medical Association. This article is a reprint of his speech to the first Seminar for Montana Newsmen at the School of Journalism May 10, 1969.*

You should realize that I'm something of an anachronism —an unreconstructed hot-type letterpressman. I began newspapering in the days when operators actually sat down at Linotype keyboards . . . in the days when, on Christmas Eve, most of the composing room—even the women—would be loaded by 11 a.m., and you knew you had to move the copy early if you were going to go to press . . . in the days when you identified a printer by his hot-lead scars, instead of his white lab coat and sterile gloves. When I go to the *Missoulian* and feel my feet sinking into that carpet, I half expect to see on the wall a sign reading "Quiet!"

Despite all the changes, I still have a few things in common with the working newspaperman. I doubt that there's been much change—or that there ever will be much change —in that hallowed institution known as the country correspondent. Country correspondents almost drove me to the wall when I was new in the business. The chap responsible for their copy went on vacation after I signed on, and I spent two nerve-shattering weeks trying to put newsletters from distant rural communities into what I considered acceptable English. One item I remember to this day. It was from our correspondent in Saylorsburg, a hamlet in the Pocono Mountains, and it went like this: "On a recent hunting trip, Vincent Altemose brought down a seven-point buck; also his brother Robert. Other bucks brought down were Tony Patrone, John Julius, and Richard Voclain."

I still have a tendency to tremble when I think of our correspondent in the village of Mount Bethel. One day, after I'd become city editor, a photographer came back from an assignment out in the county and asked me whether I knew the Community Hall in Mount Bethel had burned. "No," I said, "I didn't." "Well," he said, "I came through there, and it's nothing but a cinder now."

Direct action seemed called for, so I phoned the lady in Mount Bethel. "Say, Mrs. So-and-So," I said, "I hear the Community Hall up there burned."

"Yes, it did," she said, "and I was mighty surprised not to see anything about it in the paper."

I did my best to explain a stringer's function and told her we didn't expect her to cover a big story like a fire—just to let us know about it, and we'd do the rest.

She said she would be glad to do that when she knew about it herself, but she didn't always know about such things until it was too late to do much about it.

So I told her how much volunteer fire companies like publicity—how it helps with their fund drives and such—and asked if she couldn't have the fire chief call her when there was a fire or the rescue boat went out or the emergency unit was called.

"Well yes," she said, "I guess I could arrange that. The fire chief's my son, and he lives with me."

And from what I read and hear, I would guess there hasn't been much change in the approach of that necessary evil, the publicity chairman. Some of you may have read, in the *National Observer,* Hal Taylor's recollection of a classic of the publicity chairman's art—the Cornelis Banta P-TA story. He recalled that in the days after World War II, the New Jersey community where he lived was trying to adjust to a social revolution. The dominant element in the town for 200 years had been residents of Dutch pioneer stock, but their control was being challenged by the second-generation offspring of Italian immigrants. The county-seat newspaper, to cope with the problems of sudden growth, had sponsored a workshop for publicity chairmen and corresponding secretaries of various organizations and had

given them standardized ruled forms on which to report their activities.

One of the forms produced the Cornelis Banta P-TA story, which went like this:

> The Parent-Teacher Association of Cornelis Banta School held its regular monthly meeting Tuesday evening in the school cafeteria, for the election of officers for the coming year, with Mrs. Noah ten Floed, president, in the chair. The nominating committee proposed Mrs. Douwe Talema for president, Mrs. David Demarest for vice president, and Mrs. Laurens van Boschkerken for secretary-treasurer. It was moved and seconded that the nominations be closed.
>
> Mrs. Gianello Venutoieri arose and said that she wanted to nominate Mrs. Nuovo Cittadino, Mrs. Giuseppe Soffiate, and Mrs. Salvatore dal Vapore. Mrs. ten Floed ruled Mrs. Venutoieri out of order. Mrs. Venutoieri appealed to the parliamentarian, Miss Sarah Kierstad, who sustained the chair.
>
> Mrs. Venutoieri took a small automatic pistol from her handbag and shot Mrs. ten Floed between the eyes. Constable Abraham Brinkerhoff came and escorted Mrs. Venutoieri to the county jail. The body of Mrs. ten Floed was removed to Van Emburgh's Funeral Parlor.
>
> There being no further business, the meeting adjourned for refreshments, which were served by Mrs. Adrian Blauvelt's committee. The next meeting will be held on Friday evening, Sept. 9, for the installation of officers.[1]

I also haven't forgotten the agony of breaking in a new reporter. One whom I remember with particular affection—and who, the last I heard, was doing well on a metropolitan newspaper—was a kid just out of the Navy. He never had been to college, and his experience was limited to work on a ship's newspaper. He had terrible trouble with his writing—grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, clarity, organization . . . you name it, he had trouble with it—but he had tremendous desire, and he worked hard to learn the writer's craft. Like most of us, he tossed leads around in his head before he got back to the office to write, but unlike most of us, he made himself think in the language of the news story, and in time he even began to talk that way. He would call me sometimes at home to tell me about some spot news development that might affect the next day's operations, and the conversation would go like this:

"Hello, Bob? This is Mel. Three Belvidere youths were acclaimed as heroes today after they plunged into the swollen waters of the Delaware River to rescue an aged Belvidere resident who had fallen into the stream while taking his customary afternoon walk."

Or:

"Hello, Bob? This is Mel. John T. Harrison, former mayor of Blairstown and longtime leader in the Blairstown business community, died of a heart attack tonight at his home. He was 67."

Well, I don't get that kind of call anymore, and I must stand before you as a critic who is not meeting a payroll or fighting with angry citizens or prying information out of recalcitrant public officials or trying to instruct inexperienced reporters or worrying about 40 daily deadlines. But there is, I think, one advantage to detachment. It gives you a chance to back off from the newspaper and take a hard look at it not as one of its producers, constantly under pressure from businessmen and lawyers and labor leaders and clergymen and lodge secretaries and charity campaigners and school superintendents and den mothers and cops and politicians and people who have been arrested and mothers of people who have been arrested, but as a simple, garden-variety reader. We all get too close to our work to evaluate it properly. This may not be true of the publisher or even the editor of the large daily. But it certainly is true of the reporter, the deskman, the city editor and the managing editor of any paper regardless of size and of the editor and the publisher of the small daily and the weekly—the men and women who are on the news firing line every day, the people who must be concerned day after day with the nuts and bolts of coverage and assignments and copy flow and makeup and deadlines.

During my years in Easton I did many things—out of habit or because the paper had always done them that way or because it was just too much trouble to go through the hell of changing people's ways—that I would not do today if I were to go back there with a free hand.

I would give less space, I think, to routine speeches made by tedious speakers at service club meetings. I wouldn't try so hard to get a photographer to the scene of every fatal traffic accident in our circulation area. I wouldn't routinely run the names of pallbearers. I wouldn't tie up so many people taking routine stories of meetings over the telephone. I wouldn't let my women's page get so bogged down in trivia that it couldn't pay proper attention to important news of general interest. I would strengthen my city hall and courthouse staffs. I would put someone on education full time. I would hunt for a couple of black staff members. And I would continue to reject—to the greatest extent consistent with being on speaking terms with my publisher—the demands of advertisers for free space in the news columns.

the need for quality editing

Most of all, I would continue to strive for fair, accurate, thorough reporting and for quality editing, which is getting harder and harder to come by. On my way to Missoula from Chicago a couple of weeks ago, I found myself unexpectedly in St. Paul. I bought a newspaper, and in the first three stories I read I found gross errors—not typos, not dropped lines, not anything you could blame on a proofreader or a printer, but gross errors in language and logic—errors that should have been caught at the copy desk but were not.

One of them, I have to admit, gave me a lot of satisfaction. Just that week my editing class handled a story about a cross-country runner, and one of the bits of illogic the students were supposed to detect was this sentence: "The record is held by Agnes Krumholtz, who crossed the

[1]Reprinted by permission of the *National Observer*.

country in 97 days in May, 1967." I think you'll agree that makes a pretty long May, but most of the kids predictably read right over it, and when the problem was called to their attention, most of them, equally predictably, seemed to feel that no reporter ever would make such an absurd mistake. But there on the front page of the *Pioneer Press* I found an item about Robin Knox-Johnston, who had just completed a solo non-stop voyage around the world, and in it was this sentence: "Last November, with his radio broken, his rudder damaged and his self-steering gear smashed, Knox-Johnston was out of contact with the rest of the world for 136 days."

In the same issue was a wire-service story about the Sirhan Sirhan trial. It read: "Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's jury failed in a second day of deliberations Tuesday to decide whether he lives or dies for the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy." What it meant, of course, was whether he would get life imprisonment or death, but that isn't what the words said.

And it took me almost until plane time—and those of you who fly Northwest know how long that is—before I figured out the meaning of a paragraph from the sports page. The baseball season was a couple of weeks old, so I was puzzled when I read this: "After being tossed out of his first game as manager of the Minnesota Twins Tuesday, Billy Martin was boiling." How come, I wondered, did Martin not manage the team in the first two weeks of play? It finally dawned on me that this was not his first game as manager, but the first time, as manager, that he'd been tossed out of a game.

Little things? Sure. Little things. But the little things add up, to the irritation of the reader. And sloppiness with little things leads inevitably to sloppiness with big things.

Newspapers, most of them, are getting more and more permissive with headlines. I'm not sure this is wrong. I was brought up in the old no-split tradition, and I still make my students write heads that don't break on prepositions and conjunctions. But there are people who argue that there's no logic in that rule. Roy Copperud is one of them. Writing in *Editor & Publisher* a few months ago, he said that all the split rule does is make a tough job tougher, and he noted that the *Los Angeles Times,* a generally well-edited newspaper, had abandoned it. So OK, provided the desk continues to insist on heads that are accurate, grammatical and unambiguous. But I have noticed, and I don't think it's coincidental, that the papers that are most permissive, that permit the most violations of the traditional headline rules, are the papers that most frequently carry heads that are inaccurate or ambiguous.

One of the headline practices that I deplore is the overuse of initials and coined abbreviations. It's handy, sure, but when I read a headline that used the initials FHA a while back I thought the story had to do with the Federal Housing Administration. It didn't. It was about Forrest H. Anderson. The mind boggles when one considers what this usage would do if our governor's name were, say, Forrest B. Inkwater. Then we might have a head proclaiming "ABM is opposed by FBI."

Permissiveness deadens the copyreader's sensitivity to the subtleties of language—the nuances of words—and leads to headlines that are misleading or hard to read. A few days ago I read an item about a Moose lodge that was getting ready to seat its new officers. The headline was: "Moose Heads to be Installed." Here's another one that might puzzle a reader who'd been at the South Pole or someplace for awhile: "New Life Likely for Kicking Horse."

A headline practice that is growing more popular, and which I deplore, is the abandonment of attribution, stated or implied, or the burial of attribution in the kicker. This results in heads that report opinion as fact, conjecture as certainty and falsehood as truth. Some of the type faces used in cold-type composition present tough headline counts, I know, but this still doesn't justify a headline that says "Johnson Attempts to Hide Misdeeds" or "Republican Rule Would be Bad for Country." Both are highly editorial.

I think perhaps we should revive some of the traditional restrictive headline rules, if only to keep our deskmen alert to the common problems of language.

The growing permissiveness and resultant sloppiness in headwriting have their counterparts in growing permissiveness and resultant sloppiness in copyreading. Technology is partly responsible—maybe mostly responsible—and I am fearful that the new and marvelously sophisticated and graphically beautiful techniques of transmission and typesetting and reproduction are going to cause a steady decline in the quality of newspaper writing and editing.

The decline in editing began, I think, with TTS—and the Dataspeed circuit and the computer and the cathode-ray tube and the Inktronics printer are to TTS as the SST and the Saturn rocket and the Apollo spacecraft and the Lem are to the World War I Spad, so obviously we have problems ahead that are even more serious than those we face today. Anyway, with the coming of TTS the telegraph editors of most newspapers abdicated. They turned over their responsibility to the wire services, and while I respect the AP and UPI, they are not infallible. Because editing TTS copy is costly and time-consuming in terms of manual resetting or repunching, errors which in the old days would have been caught and fixed on nine out of 10 local newspapers now are appearing in all 10.

the omnipotent whom

Last year there was a prison break at Deer Lodge, and the AP's lead paragraph had a foolish grammatical error. One sentence read: "A ground and air search continued for the other 11, whom Warden E. C. Ellsworth Jr. said forced their way out of a rear window." It's easy to mix up "who" and "whom"—writers do it all the time—but it's also easy for the copyreader to spot the mistake, and I imagine every copy desk in Montana could have caught this misused "whom" had it cared to. Not one did, though, so far as I could determine, and I checked most of the dailies, just out of curiosity, after seeing it first in the lead story in the *Missoulian.* The Butte *Montana Standard,* the Helena *Inde-*

pendent Record, the *Billings Gazette* and the *Great Falls Tribune* all let it go through. As I recall it, the *Miles City Star* and the Kalispell *Daily Inter Lake* used it that way, too, and there were a couple of others.

The point here is not that an occasional grammatical error is going to hurt anyone, but that repeated grammatical errors and misspellings and inconsistencies and faulty arithmetic and slips in vocabulary are going to hurt the newspaper's reputation and lessen the reader's confidence in the paper's credibility in matters of fact. And when you've lost your reader's confidence, you might as well be putting out a shopper.

The Deer Lodge "who-whom" problem is not an isolated example, and the papers in this region are not alone in giving only a lick and a promise to wire-service copy. This lead caught my eye a couple of years ago, and I still use it in class sometimes as an example of quotation stammer:

> ROCHESTER, N.Y. (AP)—Virginia Aitken, who went to Formosa three years ago to become a Buddhist nun, is back home and said Friday she had returned to Christianity.
>
> "I have returned to Christianity," Miss Aitken, 23, said.

In a quick check of the papers in our Journalism Library, I found that major dailies all over the country had carried the story just that way.

Now I realize there's a cost problem and everyone has a natural disinclination to reset stuff that he has paid to have set automatically. I used to argue with a colleague in Easton over this. I sometimes had a staff man covering a story that was being handled, for the AP, by one of the other dailies in our area, and if the story came in on tape before I had gotten our own reporter's story in type, this fellow would contend that we ought to use the wire story, though we had gone to the expense and trouble of staffing the event to get our own.

a middle ground

I know, too, that it's impractical for more than a few papers to do what the *Washington Post* does—that is, edit all wire service TTS monitor copy and not use the AP and UPI tape. But somewhere, between this extreme and the extreme of non-editing, there must be a middle ground—for the newspaper that is financially sound, at any rate—where the reader gets a little consideration even if it costs a buck or two. Whether editors who are now on this ground will be able to hold it is questionable. Last year the ANPA announced the development of a computer editorial program that automatically edits a news story to a predetermined shorter length. It is used to take standard TTS coded tape and edit it to the length desired by the editor, ready for tape-operated typesetting equipment—all without human intervention, except for the editor's decision on length. And I imagine the day is not far distant when the computer will take over the layout function and make that determination too.

I don't know, and surely no one can predict with any certainty, where technology is leading us in our editing and proofreading practices. I do know, as you do, that the computer is still rather inexpert in dealing with hyphenation. (When it breaks "psychologist" after the "ps" and "corner-back" after the "b," it obviously has a lot to learn.) And I know that experiments with "teaching" it the principles of style have not been totally successful. I'm told, for example, that the *Washington Star* was troubled a few years ago because its computer had been programmed to change the initials "U.S." to "United States." The result, in one story, was a historical reference to Gen. United States Grant, and the computer had to be told not to do that again.

So while it's hard to predict the specifics, I think that on the basis of the experience we've already had we can be sure that technological advance will present increasingly difficult problems for the respecter of the language. For example, what happens when the editor lays down his pencil and begins pushing buttons to make his editing changes? Will he have a button to change "lacerations and contusions" to "cuts and bruises"? Will he have a button to change "elongated yellow fruit" to "banana" or "nocturnal resting place" to "bed" or "precious red fluid" to "blood"? And if he's editing with a light pen on a cathode ray tube image, will the publisher hold still for wholesale copy revisions that are going to mean additional computer time, waste of tape and waste of type? I don't know, but I suspect the answers—if editors hold still for them—will mean newspapers that are increasingly profitable and increasingly efficient in production techniques and increasingly attractive graphically but also increasingly more offensive to those who like good writing and tight editing, and increasingly less useful to those who want to get the latest, most complete and most informative reports from newspapers rather than from the superficial news merchandisers of TV.

The new technology is killing off, among other things, the sound old principle that the wire story with a local angle should be localized. I tell my students that if they have to dig way down in a story to find a headline, chances are the story is badly organized—the true lead is buried. And the next day someone will protest: "Look, sir, here's this headline from the Inferno Gulch Epitaph about an Inferno Gulch football player being cut by the Packers, but in the story he's only mentioned in the last paragraph with a bunch of other guys. So what's this you're feeding us about the relationship between the head and the lead?"

Sure, I know it grieves the business side when the story is rewritten and has to be repunched or set by hand. I know it grieves the business side if handling copy the way it ought to be handled means hiring an extra person. But if we want quality, the business side will just have to grieve.

In many instances the newspaper today isn't just failing to emphasize the local angle—it isn't even bothering to check it out. Obviously there should be close coordination and cooperation between the local and the wire desks. I used to ask the wire desk to show me the casualty list whenever there was a commercial plane crash, even if it was thousands of miles away, so I could see whether the list had a local name. Once, I recall, my wire desk colleagues didn't do it, and our first edition—the one that went to the area most directly concerned—missed noting that the pilot was a native of a nearby rural community in which his parents and other relatives still lived and where he was well known.

The local angle ought to be checked out not just to give the reader the most for his money but to help guarantee accuracy. I never would totally trust a story involving my community, filed from a distant point by reporters and editors I didn't know. I read a page-one wire story the other day about a "local man" who had been hurt in a plane crash. It gave no address. If the newspaper had checked this detail, I believe it would have learned that the man was not local at all—that his hometown, in being transmitted from the hospital or police to a reporter to an AP correspondent to the AP bureau to the wire, had somehow been misreported. "Big Timber" became "Missoula."

Thus, for want of a routine check, a story with little local interest wound up taking space on page one—and misinforming thousands of readers.

The new technology is threatening the quality of newspaper editing in other ways. Those of you dealing with cold-type composition are in a better position to discuss the problems than I am. But I am appalled by some of the things I have heard about the growing dominance of the back shop, the increasing influence of composing-room decisions, the growing control of the mechanical and production people over the editorial product. The newsroom and the composing room have been natural enemies since the days of Gutenberg, but I do not believe it has been immutably ordained that the composing room should always win. In fact, it is my conviction that when all attempts at compromise, adjustment and reconciliation have failed, and one side or the other must make a final decision, it must be the editorial department that has the last word—it must be, that is, if we're going to put out a high-quality product.

editorial authority required

The editorial department must be able to order makeovers and replates and late setting and even stop press in emergency situations. I know the production chief is going to snarl and the circulation manager is going to be cross and the publisher is going to gyrate, but the alternative to giving this authority to responsible editorial employes is enduring the frustration of turning out a newspaper that is less than it could be and should be.

A couple of weeks ago, a printer on a Montana newspaper got his hands mixed up while dealing with a story that was to run under a two-column head in columns five and six. Somehow he pasted up the lead and the next two paragraphs in column six and wrapped the rest of the story to column five. Did the paper replate to fix this affront to its readers? Nope. I'm told the thing went through the whole press run. As a newspaperman, I am saddened when the counting house becomes so powerful that it destroys pride in product.

Incidentally, the graduates I hear from—and this is true of my students from Ohio State as well as Montana, and I bet it's true of youngsters in the newspaper business everywhere—don't complain much these days about their pay. They do complain quite often that nobody tries to teach them anything and that their editors don't give a damn about the quality of their work—they just want to get the paper out. If the reservoir of competent new young talent for newspapers runs dry, the reason, I think, will be the apathetic approach to editorial quality being fostered in part by the new technology. Young people want to be challenged. If their editors don't make them shape up, they'll ship out.

On an allied topic: I don't see how any publisher can expect a news staff to work efficiently and skillfully if he doesn't provide the needed tools. I understand—and I get this not just from newspaper people but also from the manufacturers of typesetting equipment—I understand that in most shops that have switched to cold-type composition the cost of proofing is considered prohibitive, so the copy desk no longer gets proofs routinely or even on special order. This, it seems to me, is a high price to pay in terms of editorial efficiency for the speed and economies and other benefits of cold type. Obviously, such an economy deprives the desk of its flexibility in putting new tops on stories and in making kills and corrections and inserts and adds as press time nears. And it would seem to place an insuperable obstacle in the path of proper editing of a multiple-edition daily. If the cost of providing this basic equipment is prohibitive, so be it. But I think that newspaper publishers should insist that the manufacturers come up with a solution —an economically practical equivalent of the old proof press—and that news executives should keep the pressure on the publishers until they get it.

For one thing, if for all practical purposes every story must be in final form when it leaves the copy desk, there is little incentive to stay with a developing story until deadline, and there is a tendency, surely, to become rigidly committed early in the news cycle to a fixed and unchangeable news budget and page layout. During General Eisenhower's final illness, some morning dailies were locking up their front pages with stories that told of medical bulletins issued at 4 o'clock the previous afternoon, while noting in the story that a subsequent bulletin would be issued within a few

hours. As a newspaper reader, I felt cheated, and as a newspaperman I was irritated by what appeared to me to be abject surrender to expediency—take the early story just because it is there. Similarly, when several people were killed by a gunman on the Pennsylvania Turnpike a few weeks ago, the morning papers content to go with the early story—one that was obviously incomplete and was sure to be updated—did not report the identification of the killer. Since he was the son of Stepin Fetchit, a movie actor many of us remember, this was information the reader should have had. Yet of the papers I checked that Sunday morning, only the *Billings Gazette* had it.

non-stories adequately written

Early commitment to an inflexible, unchangeable layout is, I suspect, responsible for some other odd things I've been seeing in newspapers of late—stories that get page-one or multiple-column display or both when they clearly don't warrant it. The fact that you're committed to a given story for a given news hole, before you're absolutely sure what the story may amount to, can cause overplay if you don't stay loose. It leads to stories like this one, which I sometimes give to my students as an example of the story that is adequately written but says nothing:

> Lars Tootle, a junior in the School of Business Administration, likes his hamburgers well done. When asked why, he said, "Because they taste better."
>
> Tootle said he realizes some people like hamburgers medium rare, and still others prefer them rare. "I have no argument with these folks," he said. "As a matter of fact, I used to take my own hamburgers slightly on the rare side."
>
> Tootle said he tried a well-done hamburger while visiting Hemisfair in San Antonio last year and liked it. He's been eating them that way ever since.
>
> He added that he usually drinks root beer when he has a hamburger, but pointed out that once in a while he has a cherry Coke.

I call this sort of story "Tootleism," and I used to think that this bit of fiction was an exaggeration. Today I wonder. Last week one of the papers I read gave two-column display on page one to a story about a woman who'd been driven to the hospital to have a baby. She made it with five hours to spare, and so far as the reader could tell there was nothing to set this lady apart from the thousands of other women who are sped to hospitals every day by drivers who wonder whether they will make it in time. Carrying this story at all amounts to acute Tootleism and putting it on page one indicates acute Tootleism with complications. I would guess that it ran on page one because it was dummied there, and when the story turned out to be a dud, the news desk wasn't flexible enough to replace it.

Speaking of hospitals, one of the little things that I find most irritating—and least understandable—is the way most of you, in your obits, refuse to let us readers know where the subject died. If someone is hurt in a traffic accident, we'll be told that he's in critical condition at Good Samaritan Hospital. But let him die, and he has died "in a local hospital" or "in a Great Falls Hospital" or "in a local nursing home." There apparently isn't anything sacred about the custom, because the Helena *Independent Record* will give the place of death, and so will some of the weeklies I've looked at—the *Silver State Post, Northwest Tribune, Powder River Examiner, Flathead Courier, Shelby Promoter,* to name a few—but most go along with it. What's the big secret? I suggest that if you're going to be cryptic at least be consistent: Report that the trial started "in a local courthouse" or that the Kiwanis Club met "in a local hotel" or that the collision happened at a "local intersection" or that "a local bank" was robbed or that "a local corporation" declared a dividend or that Mrs. Dogood got the Golden Deeds award from "a local service club."

By the way, I read an obit the other day about a person who died "in a local convalescent home" of "a recent illness." It reminded me of an undertaker in Pennsylvania who often told our obit writer that one of his clients had died of "complications." Just plain old complications. And that reminded me of the most memorable lead I've ever read on a story involving a mortuary. It topped a feature written by an Ohio State student whose assignment had been to interview someone with an unusual job or hobby. Her lead said: "After working in her father's funeral parlor last summer, Marian Martin decided to become an undertaker because she likes to work with people."

The writing and editing of obits hereabouts bother me. I think obituaries are news, and I think they should be written and edited with the same care and pride as anything else. Yet most of your papers write them to a rigid formula: In effect you feed the information to a computer and let it respond with a printout that leads with the name of the decedent, then instantly goes to a dull, chronological recital of the details of his life. You know how it goes:

> Homer Heffelfinger, 57, died at a local hospital Friday after an illness of three days.
>
> Born in Spoonfed, Kans., Heffelfinger was graduated from Spoonfed High School. He moved to Topeka in 1932 and was employed in the county courthouse.
>
> In 1934 he took as his bride the former Euphemia Pettibone of Topeka.
>
> He was a member of Capitol Lodge 185, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and at the time of his death was President of the United States, a post he had held for five years.
>
> Survivors include his wife, Euphemia, at the family home, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C.; a brother, Herbert, of Enid, Okla., and 11 sons, Alex, Aaron, Arthur, Alan, Albert, Alvin, Abner, Andrew, Adlai, Atherton and Joe, all at the family home.
>
> Funeral arrangements pend.

I think obits should be written for newspapers, not for *Who's Who in America.*

Three other things I would like to mention: There is, I think, too much editorializing in the news columns of the

Montana press. The reporters are letting their feelings show —or their editors' feelings. I don't care how you feel about Montana Power or air-pollution control or student radicals or blacks or poverty on the reservations or Denault Blouin or gambling and prostitution or protest marches or gun controls or the Lincoln back country or the Fish and Game Commission or hydroelectric projects or Vietnam or Abe Fortas or the sales tax or four-letter words or any of the other pressing issues of our time. The reader is entitled to a presentation of fact that is just as objective as the writer and editor can make it. I'd even treat the John Birch Society fairly. Last month, in a report of a protest meeting involving urban renewal, one of our papers told of the views expressed by a self-proclaimed Bircher named Foley. The story did it this way: "Feelings of the group ranged from sentimentality about the historic qualities of South and Main to Foley's illusions of a nationwide plot." That is hardly objective reporting.

Another story, about a couple of young fellows who'd been involved in a drinking escapade, described the culprits as "attendees at a publicly funded training school at the fairgrounds." This, I submit, is a thinly disguised attack on the use of public funds to educate anyone who has enough spending money to get drunk. I wonder how the paper would handle the story if, say, a prominent banker were arrested for committing some offense drunk. Would it call him "an officer of a bank whose deposits are insured with public funds"? It's another example of the not-what-you-do-but-who-you-are syndrome that seems to afflict some of our newspapers. They may catch it from our justice and police courts.

Secondly, despite the hue and cry of the ASNE and the APME and SDX and the NCEW and others about government secrecy and the people's right to know, too many newspapers are being suckered by the government PR men and the official leakers of unattributed "secret information." Last week, in a transparent effort to head off legitimate criticism of its decision to close the Job Corps centers, the Nixon administration leaked information about its allegedly confidential files on crime and perversion in the Job Corps. A sensational story and, if true, certainly one to which the American people were entitled long ago and to which they are entitled now in a forthright, honest report backed up by documentation, if indeed the administration does feel that conditions at the camps—rather than the economics of their operation, as claimed officially—are sufficient reason for shutting them down. But instead of a forthright report, somebody leaked a bunch of unattributed, undocumented, out-of-context charges. And the press, sheeplike, went along, with many papers giving this collection of innuendoes prominent display, in some cases under page-one streamers. I don't object so much to this kind of political maneuver, which is pretty much SOP for any administration, Republican or Democratic, as I do to the complicity of the press. An appropriate editorial comment on the Job Corps situation, by the way, might be that if we close the camps because of crime and homosexuality, we ought to shut down the prisons, too. I hear they have a similar problem.

Finally, I'd like to request, as a reader, that you work to eliminate some of the tantalizing, frustrating holes that I find in so many stories.

Last summer one of our graduate students covered a fire at Miller Creek. "Unlike the other firefighters," one part of the story said, "McDonough was wearing slacks." This reminded me of one of my favorite passages from the *Lantern,* the student newspaper at Ohio State. The story told of a power failure that had left 12 students stranded in an elevator in a high-rise dormitory. "Dean Milton Overholt," said the story, "rescued most of them."

The case against censorship . . . rests on the simple proposition that when you try to suppress things you always make things worse and not better. You begin by suppressing witchcraft. You end by suppressing Galileo.

Katharine Whitehorn in
The Observer (London), Oct. 27, 1968.

TIME OF CHANGE: LEE'S DECADE IN MONTANA

By *CHARLES E. HOOD JR.*

Mr. Hood, an instructor in journalism at the University of Montana, analyzes in this article what has happened to eight Montana dailies since they were purchased from the Anaconda Company in 1959 by Lee Enterprises. The writer earned a B.A. in 1961 and an M.A. in 1969 from the Montana School of Journalism. He has worked for the Lewistown (Mont.) Daily News, *the Helena Bureau of United Press International, the Great Falls* Tribune *and the Missoula* Missoulian. *This report, prepared for a graduate class in the journalism school, was published as the lead article in the May 31, 1969,* Editor & Publisher. *It is reprinted here by permission and is followed by a commentary in which Mr. Hood examines recent developments at the Lee newspapers and presents additional opinions about the Montana dailies.*

After a decade of dramatic change, Montana's Lee newspapers scarcely resemble their Anaconda predecessors. The Company's don't-rock-the-boat philosophy is being supplanted by a policy that invites controversy. Afghanistanism has been replaced by community-oriented editorials. Sacred cows gradually are disappearing.

The papers by no means are faultless in the eyes of readers or even their own employes, some of whom suggest that Lee editors still are too reluctant to question their superiors or challenge the status quo. But improvement is evident.

On June 1, 1959, the Lee Newspaper Group of the Midwest acquired the eight languishing Montana dailies from the Anaconda Company, ending an era of Company press domination in the state. Included were the Billings *Gazette*, Anaconda *Standard*, Livingston *Enterprise*, Helena *Independent Record*, Butte *Daily Post* and *Montana Standard* and the Missoula *Daily Missoulian* and *Sentinel*.

Striking physical change also has occurred. In Butte and Missoula, the afternoon papers, the *Daily Post* and the *Sentinel*, have been discontinued in favor of stronger morning editions. The *Gazette*, the *Missoulian* and the *Enterprise* have been converted from hot metal to offset. The *Gazette* has moved into a multi-million-dollar newspaper plant that ranks among the most attractive and modern in the country, and the *Enterprise* also has occupied a new plant. Elsewhere, newsrooms, in the brass-spittoon and green-eye-shade era 10 years ago, have undergone substantial renovation that has included added space and installation of wall-to-wall carpeting.

"It makes an old newspaperman nervous, but you get used to it," jokes *Enterprise* editor Roy Anderson.

The Helena and Butte mechanical operations have been improved by utilization of the best of the hot-metal equipment from the converted papers.

In news coverage, one of the most impressive improvements has been the creation of the Lee State Bureau with headquarters in Helena, the state capital. Two of the most promising recent graduates of the University of Montana journalism school, Jerry Holloron and Daniel Foley, were recruited to man the bureau at a time when lucrative offers from out of state are enticing the best of the school's graduates. The two reporters, who have master's degrees in journalism, have provided in-depth coverage of state government activities that received minimal attention 10 years ago. The Lee papers are linked to the state bureau by voice, direct facsimile, Teletype and Dataphone transmission.

Holloron covered the 1968 national political conventions at Miami and Chicago, sending back lively, locally oriented stories about the Montana delegations.

Under Anaconda management, the papers had little chance for improvement; newspapering was a sideline to the Company's interests in copper mining and other enterprises. Equipment expenditures were made only to maintain existing conditions. Although no orders were handed down from the front office, editors followed unwritten rules.

News stories unfavorable to the Company or that might upset the status quo seldom appeared in print.

To Lee, newspapering was no sideline. A Lee editor who worked for many years on the Anaconda papers said, "The Lee people made their money in newspapers. This is what they know how to do. Their business is publishing newspapers."

One of the first actions by the new owners was a series of lateral personnel moves. Promising newsmen were transferred from one paper to another and were given key editorial positions.

"You could call it cross pollenization," said Lloyd Schermer, vice president of Lee Enterprises, Montana Divisions, and publisher of the *Missoulian*. "We wanted to give them a chance to flower."

Steps were taken to decentralize the Anaconda operation. Although Lee named Dick Morrison general manager of the Montana papers, he was given no authority to direct news coverage or editorial positions. When Morrison retired a few years later, the post of general manager was discontinued. For the first time, the newspapers were running themselves.

For news personnel, this new freedom was greeted with some disbelief.

"We told them they were free agents," Schermer said. "They had to feel their way around to see if we meant it or not."

A veteran Anaconda newsman who now edits a Lee paper recalls, "They told us to put out a good newspaper. It took us a little time to adjust to that."

It was Schermer who wrote for the *Missoulian* one of the first editorials that demonstrated the new independence of the Lee papers. Entitled "The River Ran Red," it criticized the paper's previous owner, the Anaconda Company, for polluting the Clark Fork River.

"The Anaconda papers were purchased with no strings attached," Schermer explains. "They exerted no pressure. They told us, 'Just treat us fairly—like anyone else.'"

editorial positions dissimilar

In the past decade, Lee editorial-page editors have spoken forthrightly on subjects of community interest. When the interests of one Lee community conflict with those of another, so do the editorial views of the respective newspapers. For years, the Billings *Gazette* and the *Missoulian* have battled editorially over educational issues affecting the University System units in their communities.

Unlike their predecessors, Lee editorial writers welcomed opinions from their readers, and letters to the editor began appearing on Lee editorial pages.

The physical appearance of the papers also has changed. Antique type faces have been replaced with modern ones; column rules have disappeared; vertical make-up has yielded to horizontal; and photo quality, particularly in the offset operations, has improved. The flexibility in make-up afforded by the offset operations has allowed imaginative young feature editors like Gaylord T. Guenin of the *Missoulian* to experiment with new concepts in page layout and design.

When the Lee group took control, it had a twofold plan that included upgrading mechanical operations and developing personnel. Because production techniques and machinery were outmoded and inefficient, Lee executives agreed that the first step had to be an upgrading of the printing processes. They initiated a program to improve the letterpress operations of every paper.

"In Missoula alone, we spent $200,000 on hot metal renovation," Schermer said.

Later, after home-office experts in finance and systems analysis had studied the Montana operations, plans were made for converting the *Gazette*, the *Missoulian* and the *Enterprise* to offset. All three made the conversion in 1968.

In 1959, photographic facilities of the papers were virtually nonexistent. What cameras were available were few and outdated. Few newsroom staffers knew how to operate them or cared. Closets served as darkrooms. With the exception of the *Missoulian*, none of the papers had engraving equipment. The Helena *Independent Record* sent its photos to Butte to be engraved.

There were no staff photographers. Most camera work was done by free-lancers or by enterprising reporters with an interest in photography. In Missoula, for example, two staff members were paid by the print for photos taken with their own cameras and developed in their own darkrooms.

Each paper now has its own engraving or offset equipment. Darkrooms have been added and modernized, quality photographic equipment has been purchased and full-time photographic personnel have been employed. Training programs have been established to develop combination reporter-photographers.

Other newsroom additions have been made. Before Lee, the Associated Press news wire and its mail-order photo service were the only outside news sources utilized. The new owners replaced the mail-photo service with AP Photofax and supplemented the AP with the New York Times News Service. Creation of the Lee State Bureau complemented AP state coverage.

News staffs have been expanded and improved. The *Gazette* news staff has increased from 18 in 1959 to 29, according to Duane (Doc) Bowler, executive editor.

"Every department was strengthened by additional and better qualified people," he said.

The *Missoulian's* news staff has increased from 12 to 18. Executive editor Edward Coyle says the paper has added a photographer, a farm editor, a Sunday editor, a dayside reporter, a receptionist-librarian, a photolab employe and a women's editor to the newsroom in the past 10 years.

Since duplicated positions were eliminated following discontinuation of the *Daily Post* in Butte, the news staff of the *Montana Standard* has expanded by two, according to executive editor Bert Gaskill. Helena and Livingston staffs have remained about the same size but have improved in quality.

The past decade has been one of undeniable progress

Working conditions also have improved. The Lee wage and salary program stresses merit rather than seniority. Department heads have authority to give raises when they consider them justified. A job-description system allows additional compensation for additional responsibility.

"We want to keep people; too many bright young men aren't going to wait around while we unclog the arteries," Schermer said.

Wage scales are among the highest in the state. Coyle recalls that a beginning reporter with a college degree received about $85 a week under Anaconda management. Now, the *Missoulian* starts its college-trained reporters at a minimum of $119 a week. The average desk editor with experience was making $125 a week a decade ago at the *Missoulian*; today the same position and experience earn about $160.

At the Billings *Gazette*, college-trained reporters start at $130 a week, with increases to $165 within the first 18 months, depending on performance. A reporter can beef up his salary to as high as $195 through merit increases.

New ideas in personnel procurement have emerged. At a recent meeting, Montana Lee editors decided that two persons should be hired and trained as supernumeraries, so Lee-trained replacements would be available when regular positions are vacated.

Lee employes have a pension plan and may participate in a savings program in which the management matches employe deposits.

Professional communications among newspapers are encouraged. Department heads meet periodically with their counterparts from other papers to exchange ideas.

Internally, the individual newspapers are learning to work as teams. Department heads meet regularly so they will know each other's problems. A Total Job Training program designed to acquaint employes with all departments has been initiated.

"We want an attitude of professionalism to pervade the whole organization," Schermer said.

Meetings within departments also occur regularly. Communication lines between department head and employe are kept open. At Billings, for example, reporters meet periodically to air gripes and to make suggestions to a management representative.

training programs successful

Training programs within departments have been initiated and have proved successful. The *Gazette* editorial employes recently completed a weekly seminar session on reporting.

However, the personnel picture is not as rosy as it might seem. Lee employes, especially younger ones in lower echelon positions, have complained that suggestions made through newly opened communications channels often fall on deaf or unresponsive ears. They claim that the personnel program, no matter how progressive or well-intentioned, must eliminate entrenched "nonproducers" if it is to be effective.

Some reporters are highly critical of what they call "leaderless" newsrooms and the combination of editorial timidity and inefficiency that they say, in effect, discourages deeply penetrating, investigative reporting on controversial issues. Yet, these problems—common to most Montana newspapers—exist to a much lesser degree in Lee papers than they did under Anaconda.

Under Anaconda management, newspaper personnel were not encouraged to attend press conventions or seminars. As a result, Anaconda newsmen rarely were seen at such gatherings. Gaskill recalls that the *Daily Post* and *Montana Standard* were not represented at a Montana Press Association convention in Butte.

Today, large delegations of Lee newsmen attend Montana press conventions. The papers have sent several newsmen to the American Press Institute in New York City and to other seminars. Lee personnel regularly attend ASNE and ANPA meetings.

The Lee philosophy appears to be paying dividends, particularly in terms of circulation. The circulation of the Billings *Gazette* has increased from 36,002 to 52,167, the largest in the state. Ten years ago, the circulation leader in Montana was the Great Falls *Tribune*. The *Missoulian* has increased from 15,135 in 1959 to approximately 25,000, a growth rate more than double that of the city's population increase. The paper has made inroads in the old territory of the Spokane, Wash., *Spokesman-Review* in western Montana, Schermer says.

Lee papers are criticized for being unable to rid themselves completely of the "Anaconda mentality." Lee newsrooms, say critics, continue to be dominated by Anaconda veterans who unconsciously are guided in their news judgment by the "don't make waves" philosophy inculcated into them during their years as Company employes.

Yet, the past decade has been one of undeniable progress, and the next 10 years hold promise for more. With most of the time-consuming physical improvements completed, Schermer believes the papers are on the verge of full development of their potentials as community leaders.

"I think we're about to blossom," he says.

Since the preceding comments were written in May, 1969, the Montana Lee newspapers have made further editorial and managerial changes and are planning others.

D. R. (Scotty) Campbell Jr., publisher of the *Montana Standard*, announced early in 1970 that the newspaper would be converted to offset by June.

Newsroom salaries have increased. For example, the standard weekly wage at the Billings *Gazette* has risen from $165 to $175.

Guenin resigned as *Missoulian* Sunday editor in September to become editor of the Aspen (Colo.) *Illustrated News*. Holloron was transferred from the Lee State Bureau to the *Missoulian*, where he became city editor October 1. Arthur Hutchinson, a veteran UPI newsman, replaced Holloron in Helena.

In August, 1970, Schermer will move to the Lee central office in Davenport, Iowa, where he will become vice president for newspaper operations and will serve as assistant to the president. John Talbot, business manager of the Billings *Gazette*, will become publisher of the *Missoulian*. Ronald J. Semple, *Gazette* managing editor since March, 1968, will replace Talbot.

On April 1, 1970, Lee sold the Livingston *Enterprise* to the Miles City Star Printing Co., which at the same time purchased the *Enterprise's* long-time competitor, the weekly Livingston *Park County News*, from Fred J. Martin.[1] Anderson was transferred from the *Enterprise* to the *Montana Standard*, where he became city editor.

part-time employes hired

Most Lee editors have hired part-time employes to handle routine obituaries and publicity releases.

The *Gazette* added an assistant city editor and created a full-time librarian's position.

The most notable changes have been at the *Missoulian*, where staff additions and better use of personnel have led to improved news coverage. A full-time reporter, Gary Langley of the Spokane (Wash.) *Spokesman-Review*, was added in November. Langley took over the government beat of Dennis Curran, who now works on special assignments and interpretive articles about environment, politics and campus affairs.

Judy Norgaard was hired to replace Dale Burk as state editor, permitting Burk to cover conservation, wildlife and outdoor recreation. With addition of a part-time employe to write obituaries and rewrite news releases, the night police reporter, Larry Pederson, devotes full time to his beat. The sports editor, Bill Schwanke, has been liberated from copyediting chores, enabling him to cover events that had been reported by coaches, participants and spectators or ignored. Local-news presentation has improved. Holloron has used horizontal layout, different column widths and white space to make the local-news page more attractive.

Despite those changes, some younger Lee newsmen still are dissatisfied with the rate of progress. They say the newsroom conditions that contributed to the departure of men like Guenin still exist. Although young men have advanced to lower-echelon editorial positions, Anaconda veterans still have final authority in the newsrooms. Their subordinates assert they too often resist or are indifferent to suggestions for improvement.

Some young newsmen complain that salaries still are too low and that the papers still are understaffed; they suggest that a chain that showed a 19 per cent sales and earning increase in 1969 (as Lee did) can afford to beef up its news staffs substantially and offer salaries that will attract and hold top persons.

But the encouraging signs outnumber discouraging ones. Lee editors are studying their news products and are seeking criticism and evaluation. At Lee's invitation, Montana journalism professors and students met for two days in October with publishers, editors and reporters. The frank discussions were valuable to both groups.

The recent changes provide additional evidence that the Anaconda newspaper philosophy nearly has vanished in Montana.

[1]For a discussion of the rivalry between the *Park County News* and the *Enterprise*, see Fred J. Martin, "Anatomy of a Failing Newspaper," and Don Anderson, "The Economics of Success," in *Montana Journalism Review*, 1968 (Number 11).

After trying for years to save the world, I have finally decided that maybe the world doesn't want to be saved.

Harry Billings of the Helena (Mont.) *People's Voice* on announcing his retirement as editor Oct. 1, 1968. Mr. Billings is a 1933 graduate of the Montana School of Journalism.

A CHALLENGING NEW SPECIALTY: HOSPITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

By *VERNON SPENCER*

Mr. Spencer, an associate professor of administrative medicine in Columbia University's School of Public Health and Administrative Medicine, is a 1942 graduate of the Montana School of Journalism. He is a fellow of the American College of Hospital Administrators and a member of numerous professional organizations. He earned a master of science degree in administrative medicine from Columbia University and has done graduate work at Northwestern University and George Washington University. Mr. Spencer has spent 26 years in hospital administration with the Navy, the Veterans Administration and the City of New York, where he was an assistant commissioner in the Department of Hospitals. He has written more than 100 articles for professional journals and is editor of Hospital Management *magazine. He is coauthor of the chapter "Education for Hospital Administration" in Macmillan's forthcoming* American Encyclopedia of Education.

Journalism graduates today have a dynamic future in many industrial specialties that they would not have considered in earlier years. One of the most promising is hospital public relations—part of the top-management team.

If one views health-care services as an industry, then we may better appreciate the magnitude of this market when we realize such services have become the second largest industry in the country, with an annual expenditure of $55 billion. By 1975, health-care expenditures are expected to reach $100 billion. They now represent 6.5 per cent of the gross national product and by 1980 should represent 8 to 10 per cent. Health manpower has become the fastest-growing segment of the manpower economy, increasing more than 50 per cent in the past 15 years.

John H. Colburn, editor and publisher of the Wichita, Kan., *Eagle* and *Beacon*, commented recently, "Regardless of what it is today, it must be different tomorrow if journalism education is to provide talented leaders, professionals and technicians for the knowledge industry. That's what we are—an industry and a profession, a conglomerate of professional and technical talent; a knowledge industry recognized for its powerful force in molding and influencing public opinion, but too often regarded as an academic stepchild. . . ."

That is exactly what the hospital and related health-care professions need desperately—professionals with technical knowledge, professionals who can hold and influence public opinion. Hospitals and health-care agencies have been catapulted onto center stage during the past 25 years of scientific and administrative progress, but they will fail to hold this position unless they tell their story more effectively to the many publics that make up our nation. The hospital-oriented journalist and, from the broader perspective, the hospital-oriented public-relations professional are important keys to the problem's solution.

Hospitals have become one of the most complex types of institutions in the large and diversified realm of business management. The profession of hospital administration must be concerned with the social and economic factors peculiar to general industry without detracting from the primary objective of providing the best possible care for the patient. Hospital administration is a specialty within the general administrative processes. The hospital administrator always must direct his efforts toward the hospital and health needs of the community he serves.

When considering the professional hospital administrator or any of the related medical-care administrators, it must be emphasized that until little more than a decade ago these administrators were also the journalists and public-relations directors of their institutions—occasionally successful, usually unsuccessful. Hospital-oriented journalists and public-

relations professionals usually were not to be found, but when they were available the hospitals traditionally passed them by as a budget luxury the hospital could not afford.

Since hospital administration and hospital public relations really originated and developed as a single entity—the success of one dependent on the success of the other—it is necessary to understand fully the professional hospital administrator and his evolution into the world of corporate power.

Hospital administration is one of the newer divisions of the graduate professional education system. Professional training for this type of administration was unheard of and never considered until the early 1900s.

In the United States, the administrators of smaller hospitals usually were registered nurses who earned a firm position in the history of hospital administration by giving valiantly of their time and efforts, though they were trained for nursing and not for administration. The larger hospitals were administered by widely known and highly respected physicians or by young medical-school graduates who wished to establish themselves in a community to open their practices. Some of those physicians were the pioneers who originated and fought for the professional education of the hospital administrator and, thereby, were an integral part of the educational process as we know it today.

Many hospitals were administered by religious orders—sisters or priests of the Catholic hospitals and ministers and rabbinical designates of others. Successful businessmen often were recruited to head hospitals and, of course, in city- and state-owned institutions, political patronage was influential. No formal education for hospital administration existed in those early days, although some of the leading administrators of the better-known hospitals did offer apprentice training programs for prospective administrators.

Hospital public relations and hospital journalism per se were unheard of at that time. Most hospitals and health-care institutions practiced what I frequently call barn-door public relations (referring to the adage of locking the barn door after the horse has been stolen), because they refused to have any contact with news media except to render what usually was a forced statement (often appearing in print as an alibi) when some unfortunate story hit the press. Administrators usually had little knowledge of or skill in the science of human relations, in planning positive public-relations campaigns, community participation, editing hospital and patient newspapers, writing effective annual reports, etc. Most hospitals appeared to the public as great somber, aseptic tombs, and the hospital's administration couldn't have been less concerned.

About 50 years ago, the American Hospital Association appointed a committee to study the desirability of professional university graduate training for hospital administrators. The professionalism of hospital administration and the professionalism of journalism are contemporaries, for Sigma Delta Chi was founded as a professional fraternity at DePauw University in 1909.

World War I shelved further consideration of such a program, and not until the mid-1920s was the next milestone reached when a committee on the training of hospital executives made specific recommendations for the professional training of hospital administrators. It said this training should be at the graduate level and should last 12 to 18 months.

advisory unit founded

In 1933, the American College of Hospital Administrators was founded to develop plans and projects for training hospital administrators. For almost a decade there had been at hospital conventions many discussions regarding the obvious and growing need for an organization of hospital administrators. Dr. Malcolm T. MacEachern, then associate director of the American College of Surgeons, was probably the single most persistent authority to further the desirability of such an organization and to point out that trained administrators were essential to the effective management of American hospitals. Although many professionals and nonprofessionals in the hospital family contributed to the development of hospital administration as a separate entity during this era, Dr. MacEachern is referred to symbolically as "The Father of Hospital Administration." The nation's administrators concurred with him and his colleagues that only through an organization such as the American College of Hospital Administrators could they originate standards of administrative competency, promote formal academic training, attract able persons to the field, decrease opportunities for the incompetent and/or poorly trained and give administrators the professional prestige they deserved.

The American College of Hospital Administrators has developed into the highly successful peer group envisaged at its outset and it has contributed greatly to the development and professionalism of hospital administration. When competent and well-trained public-relations directors and journalists became available, the American College of Hospital Administrators and the American Hospital Association both recognized the need to separate the responsibilities of public relations from the administrator's staff and line obligations. Hospital public relations and hospital journalism were established within a professional framework of their own—usually with staff responsibilities assigned to the hospital public relations director and line responsibilities to the hospital journalist. Eight years ago, hospital public relations directors were recognized officially when the American Hospital Association created a professional peer group, the American Society For Hospital Public Relations Directors.

Prior to 1934, several colleges had offered baccalaureate courses in hospital administration and some, in affiliation with hospitals, offered noncredit trainee programs. But none offered a graduate degree in hospital administration.

The first program in hospital administration leading to the master's degree was begun at the University of Chicago in 1934. Further development of university programs in hospital administration was retarded for nearly a decade by the depression. The second graduate course was started at

Northwestern University (Evanston and Chicago) by Dr. MacEachern in 1943; the program was canceled in 1961. The third was begun at Columbia University in 1945 and now is the second oldest professional graduate program in hospital administration.

Whereas World War I retarded the growth of professional education in hospital administration, World War II gave considerable impetus to such programs. Since most of the nation's hospitals were administered by physicians or nurses, World War II created a shortage of administrators. Medical and nursing expertise was needed at the battlefield. Consequently, hospitals were without anyone who could adequately administer them. This manpower void provided further drive to the graduate programs, and in 1948 the Association of University Programs in Hospital Administration was formed. Membership is tantamount to accreditation or official approval. Today 23 university programs hold this prized membership with six more holding associate memberships.

The Association of University Programs in Hospital Administration has described the modern hospital administrator as a "specialist in administration, an educator, a community adviser and an organizer" (each requiring also the special talents, in whole or part, of the hospital-oriented public-relations specialist). The hospital administrator today assumes the same rank in community life as a bank president, a school head or an industrial executive. He reports to the governing body. Either directly or indirectly, he is responsible for the operation of the entire institution, including educational and research activities. He must assure the medical and scientific staffs, the governing board and the patients that the hospital provides the highest possible standards of service, efficiency and economy. He must plan, direct and coordinate activities that would be corporate entities if they existed outside the institution. In fact, there are so many categories of responsibility that most administrators eventually suffer from a disease diagnosed as "Hardening of the Categories."

In addition to controlling departmental operations, the administrator counsels the governing board in developing planning programs affecting the hospital and its relationship to other community health agencies. He forms closely coordinated groups of medical men and other professional workers whose goal is high standards of health care. He is the middle man between the board and the medical staff, the board and the patient and the board and the public. He interprets hospital functions to the board, the medical staff, the personnel and the community, and he devises educational programs to encourage coordination of all concerned. The growth and development of the entire institution as well as the institution's acceptance by the patients, staff and community depend in large measure on the vision, creativity and ability of the administrator and on the proper telling of the whole story by the public-relations director.

The medical and dental staff, research scientists, industrial and business executives and civic and public leaders turn to the hospital administrator as the one most important individual with sufficient specialized education, experience and talent to help solve the community's hospital and health-care problems and to formulate plans for necessary facilities and services.

dramatic changes

The practice of the professional hospital administrator is changing dramatically as medical science and business management advance and change. In the early years, the administrator concerned himself generally with administering activities within the hospital. Today he spends increasing time in activities outside his own institution, dealing with problems of community-wide health care and influencing favorably the many publics that make up the community.

To perform with any degree of success, the administrator must develop an exceptionally strong and well-trained staff, and one of the key members of his inner circle is (or should be) the director of public relations. The trend is obvious—hospitals that prosper and serve their home communities the most efficiently and economically are those in which policy decisions are reached by the board, of course, but in coordination with the publics of concern to the hospital. Although the hospital's management and governing board evaluate medico-sociological trends, it is and will be the public-relations personnel who successfully interpret those trends to the public.

In the hospital of the future, public-relations departments will continue to employ and develop those journalism school graduates who are best able to tell the hospital's story and to tell it well. There are many avenues of specialty for the young journalist within the hospital and in related fields.

Public relations is more challenging in hospitals and health-care organizations today than possibly in any other type of organization. There are many stories that never have been told and should have been. There are many alarming misconceptions about hospitals and health care—misconceptions that must be rectified. As hospitals go through their era of greatest development, they are faced with a multitude of challenging problems: bigness, rising costs, public apathy, new and highly specialized equipment, expansion or merger programs, changing professional techniques and skills, the possibility of greater governmental control, etc.

In the hospitals of tomorrow, some immediate issues that will confront the administration will be the ramifications of a national health-insurance program, provision of the broadest possible spectrum of health services, an end to the dual system of charity medicine, a strong national program of preventive medicine, a much louder and clearer voice for the consumer in providing services and rating their quality, a broader base of health workers and new criteria for their credentials, an emphasis on out-patient and home care and

many others. Each area of change will require many stories told effectively. They will be told well by the nation's hospital public-relations directors and by the nation's hospital-based journalists.

Fifteen years ago when I arrived in New York City, I surveyed several leading hospitals and it was almost impossible to find one with a qualified director of public relations. If such a position existed, it usually was filled by the wife of a staff physician, a secretary or someone else who evidenced some PR talent or was put into this job because there was no other place for her.

Hospital public relations has developed quickly because of desperate need; it has become one of the most important key staff positions because of service and accomplishment. Today most hospitals of any size or prominence have full-time PR directors—usually competent individuals with at least a baccalaureate degree in journalism, advertising or public relations.

Hospitals now realize they must serve many and varied publics—patients, visitors, medical staff, hospital employes, varied ethnic groups, volunteers, the general community and many more. The hospital public-relations director deals directly with each of those publics on behalf of the board of trustees and the administrator. His activities know no limitation if they are effective and accomplish the purpose. Most public-relations directors and their staffs prepare the hospital's annual report, the employe newspaper, the patient newspaper and booklets explaining the various facets of the hospital to patients, visitors and companies with which the hospital does business. Recruiting publications are of considerable importance to interns, residents, student nurses and others in technical and professional specialties.

Since community relations and employe and patient relations are equally vital, the public-relations director is of paramount importance in evaluating the attitudes of these different groups and in developing a communications program to help each understand the hospital, its services and its goals.

The public-relations director in today's hospital must be an expert in group communication, in interpreting management plans and actions to the public and in reporting public attitudes and reactions to management. Many public-relations directors organize speakers bureaus and assume responsibility for employe and patient orientation. Writing for the local news media and appearing on radio and television programs are part of his duties.

Directors of hospital public relations are in an ideal position to write feature articles for the many professional hospital journals and the national magazines and newspapers. Health care and hospital care are subjects of concern to all persons.

The future for directors of hospital public relations is limited only by the talent and motivation of the person concerned. Although salaries for hospital journalists and public-relations directors equal or surpass the community average in most localities, some directors advance up the PR ladder by moving to large organizations responsible for health-care planning, to hospital consultant firms and other industry-related groups and to educational and research foundations. Others elect to remain within the hospital setting and move to the larger hospital centers.

Finally, some directors of public relations or hospital journalists become hospital administrators. Most graduate schools of hospital administration do not require a specific major for the baccalaureate degree held by applicants. A degree in journalism is a natural as the basic educational requirement for the future hospital administrator who must spend much of his professional life communicating as effectively as possible in this highly competitive field.

Use of the following quote is highly risky, probably, in this Agnew-and-the-press era, but what the heck. It is apropos to quote from Thomas Carlyle's second volume (1837) of *The French Revolution*: ". . . Great is Journalism. Is not every able editor a ruler of the world, being a persuader of it?"

Josh Billings' Advice To Newspaper Correspondents

No notis will be took of letters what haint got no postage stamp into them.

Write only on one side of the manuskript and don't write much onto that.

Don't send a manuskript unless you can read it yourself after it gets dry.

We pay, all the way up the hill, from ten cents to one dollar for contributions, according to heft.

Settlement made promptly at the end of the next ensuing year.

The highest market prices pade for awfull raleroad smashes and elopements with another man's wife.

Your remarks might possibly lead one more man to think as you do, and we don't want our collums held responsible for increasing the number of phools.

The world has already got more phools than there is any need of.

Quoted in Montana's first newspaper, the Virginia City *Montana Post*, June 1, 1867.

SUBPOENAS AND VICE PRESIDENTS: TELEVISION AND THE GOVERNMENT

By *PONCHITTA PIERCE*

This article comprises excerpts of a speech by Miss Pierce, a special correspondent for CBS News, at the Matrix Table banquet at the University of Montana April 12, 1970. She is a 1964 graduate of the School of Journalism at USC, where she was named one of seven outstanding women of her senior class. Following graduation, she joined Ebony Magazine *as an assistant editor and subsequently became associate editor and New York Editorial Bureau Chief for the magazine's parent firm, the Johnson Publishing Co. She went to work for CBS in 1968 and often has presented special reports on the CBS morning and evening national news broadcasts. Miss Pierce won a Penney-Missouri Award for her story "The Mission of Marian Wright" and a New York Urban League Award for "sustained excellence in interpreting, analyzing and reporting the news."*

I have learned—especially since coming to CBS—that freedom of the press cannot be taken for granted, even in a democracy.

There are those who feel the press should not be so free, that it in effect has a responsibility to provide the government with good public relations or to be a conduit for its policy. They believe the press should present what the government says, that it should not necessarily analyze these sayings or criticize them. If it does otherwise, then—in the opinion of our country's Vice President—the press is hostile if not downright irresponsible.

We could not talk about freedom of the press, of course, without mentioning the Vice President, because in recent history he has articulated the gravest threat to freedom of the press. Many of us were watching that November night when the Vice President, in Des Moines, Iowa, lashed out at broadcast journalism. Many of us also were tuned in when a few nights later in Montgomery, Ala., he extended his criticism to newspapers, particularly the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post.*

The Vice President—and one can only assume he also was speaking for the administration—complained about the influential power of television network news—a power he seems to think often is used more to brainwash than to inform. Mr. Agnew charged that television enjoys a monopoly. Yet any survey will show that there are four competitive television networks, 800 television stations and 7,000 radio stations that originate their own news. It is estimated that on the average day 65 per cent more hours of viewing are devoted to television station-originated news broadcasts than to all network news broadcasts combined.

The Vice President also complained about media concentration and mentioned the *Washington Post* and other newspapers, which he considers hostile to the administration. Other media concentrations—similar except that they support administration policy—were not included. In fact, we do not have to go to Washington or New York for media concentrations. We can turn right here to your Lee Newspapers in Montana.

The Vice President said "the views of this fraternity—the network newsmen—do not represent the views of America." He added that "perhaps it is time that the networks were made more responsive to the views of the nation." While there are those who agree with the Vice President's feeling that the press is too liberal and anti-administration, there also are those who feel as strongly that the press is too conservative and too even-handed. If a supposedly conservative Republican administration thinks we are too liberal, what will another administration think of us—one that is liberal? Will it find us conservative?

The problem with the Vice President's speech was that what he had to say was eclipsed by the way he said it and why he said it. The same speech by someone other than the Vice President of the United States might have met with

more sober reaction both inside and outside the media. The issues Mr. Agnew raised should be debated and discussed. We were concerned about those issues before Mr. Agnew became Vice President. And we still will be concerned about them after he is no longer Vice President.

The frightening thing about the Vice President's speech is the fact that he is indeed the Vice President and as he reminded the nation, broadcast journalism is licensed and that license can be revoked by the government. Thus the effect of his speech—the implication to station owners, it seems—was that station news operations were being watched by the government—on behalf of the silent majority. If the stations carried news that was too negative—too critical—then there was the possibility the licenses might be reviewed and even withdrawn.

No other segment of the American press ever has been licensed, but stations are licensed because so far that has been deemed the only way to insure that not too many will be competing for limited airways. Such licensing also is meant to insure that the airways will be used in the public interest. Unfortunately, it also can be used as a hammer—as a reminder of the power the government still holds over broadcasters. It seems as if the time has come to find some realistic way to separate broadcast press functions from government licensing.

One might have concluded that the Vice President actually was expressing only a momentary dissatisfaction with the press—as we all are inclined to feel at some time or another—and that there was no real attempt to intimidate the press. That may be so. I hope so. But there is still the matter of reporters being issued subpoenas that demand they turn over all their notes on certain stories, their off-the-record background material and films and tapes not used on the air. Thus far the subpoenas have focused mainly on the Black Panthers, the Students for a Democratic Society and the Weathermen. The subpoena issued to Earl Caldwell, a black reporter for the *New York Times*, led a group of black journalists in New York to take out a newspaper advertisement to tell the black community that as reporters they "would not be used as spies . . . informants or undercover agents by anybody" and that they "strongly object to attempts by law enforcement agencies to exploit our blackness."

The question of subpoenas on reporters' notes goes beyond Earl Caldwell. It affects the rights and future of all journalists. It affects their ability to communicate. As Mike Wallace, who also was threatened with a subpoena after his interview with exiled Panther Eldridge Cleaver appeared on "60 Minutes," so aptly put it: "If I were forced to reveal my sources and whatever information deemed confidential —not only the Black Panthers wouldn't talk to me . . . but even people in government wouldn't talk to me." You may ask if there is justification for such subpoenas. There are difficult legal questions involved and the line too thin between the rights of judicial inquiry and a free press. The real concern is the possible effect of such subpoenas on news sources and news gathering and the possibility that people—not sure where their comments will appear and under what circumstances—may not say anything.

It seems Federal Judge Alfonso Zirpoli fully understood the problem in acting on Mr. Caldwell's case. He ruled that the *New York Times* reporter must appear before a grand jury, as directed, but he would not have to disclose confidential information to the jury unless there was a "compelling and overriding national interest that cannot be served by alternative means." Thus while the judge recognized that giving testimony before a grand jury is the obligation of "every person within the jurisdiction of the government," he also recognized that the grand jury power of testimonial compulsion can "impinge upon or repress First Amendment rights of freedom of speech, press and association." It is interesting to note that Montana—with only 11 other states—does legally guard against a reporter having to divulge the source of his information.

* * *

Now some of you may well ask is there, in fact, the possibility that the Vice President was right—that the press is anti-establishment? Too liberal? I don't think so. I think the reason is that most Americans like to go about their business. They see life one way and whatever doesn't set with their view is wrong. But a majority and a minority view do hold in this country and it is our responsibility to report both. We are not in a consensus game or a popularity contest. We are not about to tone down stories dealing with the problems of hunger, racial struggle, war, pollution, the crisis in education and growing lawlessness. We don't try to overplay these problems, but to people who are tired of hearing it all and who don't really care about it, anything can be too much.

The present administration certainly is not unique in feeling that it has not been handled fairly by the press. I can remember former Vice President Hubert Humphrey saying, after he was out of office, that there were many times when President Johnson and he wanted to wring the necks of newscasters, writers and editors. Yet they never attacked the press the way the present administration has. Why? Did they have a better understanding of the separation that should exist between government and the press? Did they have a better understanding of what freedom of the press really means? John Kennedy was not always pleased with the press—in fact he could get quite angry—but it was he who said, "The men who create power make an indispensable contribution to the nation's greatness, but the men who question power make a contribution just as indispensable."

Although the Vice President has charged the press with unfairness, the government's own regulatory agency—the Federal Communications Commission—does not seem to agree. In three instances in which CBS has been charged with being untruthful and inaccurate, the FCC has ruled that there was no unfairness that would justify FCC intervention. The cases involved our coverage of the Demo-

cratic Convention, our report of deprivation in Marks, Miss., and our documentary "Hunger in America." All three showed sides of America—violence, poverty, inhumanity—sides that we would rather not know about. The broadcasts were investigated by Congress. The FCC not only judged them fair but also judged fair the coverage of President Nixon's Vietnam speech—the speech that set off the Vice President's attack against the media.

We also may ask how the Vice President's speech has affected television news. It has, in the opinion of CBS News president Richard Salant, "encouraged affiliates and a large part of the public to apply new pressures. It has made all of us edgy. We have to fight now to make sure we're not giving in."

I don't want my concern about the Vice President's remarks to imply that I think everything is all right within the world of broadcast journalism. On the contrary. There are good reporters and there are bad ones. One can only hope that the bad continue to diminish in number.

There are other areas for improvement—particularly in the hiring of more black and more women correspondents. At CBS there are only four black network correspondents and reporters in a staff of 58 and there are only two women. The ratio for the other networks is not much different. Why are there so few black and women reporters and correspondents—especially on the network level? One might say the desire outdistances the supply. But I think if the networks search in earnest they could come up with more women and more blacks. They could also find some Mexican Americans, some Puerto Ricans, some Indians.

I also feel that we could do more in covering the story of our minorities. For instance there are more than 23,000 Indians on reservations in Montana. How many of us really know the story of the red man in America: How he once owned 138 million acres and now has only 55 million? How many of us know that many Indian children never go beyond the fifth grade, that family income for a family of four is $1,500? Indians live in this vicinity—the Flathead Reservation is fewer than 50 miles away. How much do you know about your Indian neighbors and how much do you care? Are Indians treated fairly in this part of the country? They may be. They may not be. Has anyone honestly tried to find out?

There have been charges that television overcovers some stories and undercovers others. It is true we have sometimes spent more time on the problems without giving as much coverage to the solutions. The trouble is, solutions aren't that easy to come by.

* * *

Another problem is simply the limitation of time. It took CBS News several years of planning and hoping before the network could provide a half-hour daily evening news program, instead of 15 minutes. Free broadcasting is based on a system of profits, and commercials are the name of the game. Even a half-hour news program has to give up five minutes to commercials. What we need—on a commercial or noncommercial basis—is more air time for news. Right now there are stories—not the last-minute breaking items, but in-depth features, human-interest stories, stories that directly affect our lives—waiting to get on the air. But there is no air time for them. What we need are longer and more new programs and more investigative, in-depth reporting.

What we need is access to more news, not less. Some—including Dr. Frank Stanton, president of CBS—would ask that television and radio be allowed "to cover all proceedings of the House, Senate and the Supreme Court to which the public and the press are admitted." We have been doing it, Dr. Stanton says, with regard to party conventions, to inaugurations and ceremonial joint sessions of the House and Senate and at the United Nations. Dr. Stanton explains that routine sessions of the Congress and the Supreme Court would not be broadcast—only critical sessions leading to major commitments by the American people. He feels "the broadcasting of such sessions would enlighten the public on the causes and rationale behind such commitments."

The press can never be too vigilant. Indeed, as Fred Friendly, who was president of CBS News in 1964, said in a recent speech, he regrets to this day that CBS News did not analyze more thoroughly President Johnson's Tonkin Gulf speech in which he asked for a blank check on Vietnam. Instead we left the air two minutes after the President concluded his remarks. Mr. Friendly says he still believes "if journalism had done its job properly that night and in the days following, America might have been spared some of the agony that followed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Not that CBS should have opposed the President's recommendations." But if CBS News had "out of common knowledge or special knowledge pointed out the facts on both sides, shown contradictions with the known record, we might have explained that after bombers would come bases and after bases troops to protect those bases and after that hundreds of thousands of more troops."

* * *

I have been talking—actually—about your right to know. I have been talking about the fact that no one in the media or in government should underestimate your intelligence, your ability to listen and make up your own minds. Mr. Agnew asked if we are demanding enough of our TV news presentations. I ask if you are demanding enough of our government. Are you demanding the opportunity to hear all sides of any news story and the right to judge for yourselves whether a newscast is fair or not? The late Ed Klauber, one of the architects of broadcast news standards, said it is the news analysts' function to help the listener "to understand, to weigh and to judge but not to do the judging for him."

All he really was saying is that the more you—the public—are told, the more you can judge for yourself. You can learn from all media—not just television or magazines or newspapers. And the more you learn, of course, the more you are able to participate in the world around you.

A WONDERFUL AGONY: THE LONELY VALOR OF RALPH McGILL

By *GARY LANGLEY*

Mr. Langley, a 1969 graduate of the Montana School of Journalism, is a reporter for the Missoula (Mont.) Missoulian. *A native of Livingston, Mont., he worked summers for the Livingston* Enterprise *while he was a student. He joined the editorial staff of the Spokane (Wash.)* Spokesman-Review *after he was graduated, then moved to the* Missoulian *in November, 1969. This article contains portions of a report he submitted for an independent-study course in the School of Journalism. The opening commentary is based on a discussion between the late Ralph McGill and Sigma Delta Chi members, including Mr. Langley.*

Troubled minds are a sign of change.

Ralph McGill

Ralph McGill stood in the doorway of his fifth-floor office in the Atlanta Constitution and Journal Building in November, 1968, as 30 student and professional members of Sigma Delta Chi filed inside. Shaking hands with each visitor, he nodded and offered an enthusiastic greeting. Then he scurried down the hallway to look for additional chairs.

The columnist was 70 but looked 60. He was modest and friendly, and he wore an inexpensive white shirt that was too large around the collar and a tie without a clasp.

Carrying a chair in each hand, he entered his cluttered office, sat back on a leather-covered, spongy chair and apologized for the lack of seating.

"I don't usually have this many people in my office," he said in a hoarse but warm voice.

Then the questions began. What kinds of things do you read? What time of day do you write your column? Do you think Governor Maddox will be re-elected?

He no doubt had answered each question many times. And he obviously knew that the person who asked the question about Governor Maddox had not done his homework. Nevertheless, he sat back, looked at each questioner and answered each query as if it never had been asked before.

"I read books and magazines," he said, flipping through the pages of several magazines lying on his desk. "I read about three books a week in addition to those I read for researching my column."

A quick glance around the crowded office was sufficient proof. Bookshelves, lining every wall, were overstuffed. Newspapers, magazines and more books were piled on his desk. Some were open, lying face down; some were held open with paperweights. Others were stacked on a small table behind the desk.

"I write my column whenever I have time," he said. "In fact, I'm working on one right now."

He pointed to one of the books on his desk: "It's a piece about this new play 'The Great White Hope.' Some people are saying Jack Johnson didn't take a dive when he was knocked out by Jess Willard. Well, I've been reading up on it and I say he did."

He laughed and a few of his visitors joined him.

"There's a photograph in this book that shows Johnson lying on his back, shading his face from the sun while the referee counts over him. Now, it sure looks to me as if he took a dive.

"Oh, the column might not get done for tomorrow's paper, but I'll make a column out of it."

He sat back and told about a man who ordered his newspaperboy to clip McGill's column before delivering his copy of the Atlanta *Constitution*, and the newsboy faithfully clipped the column each day.

"That's just some of what I'm up against here."

He pointed to an ax handle on one of his office walls and said a woman had sent it to Jack Tarver, president of the Atlanta Newspapers, Inc., with written orders to "hit McGill over the head with it."

"You just can't let things like that bother you."

He passed around a signed photograph showing Gov. Lester Maddox, then owner of an Atlanta restaurant, an ax handle in hand, chasing a black man from his place of business.

"The governor can't succeed himself, and they tell me his wife isn't interested in the job," he said whimsically. "I don't think he'd get elected again if he could run. But then I don't see how he got elected in the first place."

Then he fondly pointed out pictures of himself with friends Carl Sandburg and John F. Kennedy.

He sat behind his desk for an hour and a half, reminiscing about his life and career, his friendships, "the paper" and the column.

McGill was born in Soddy, Tenn., in 1898. ("Where is Soddy? It's three miles from Daisy.")

After being educated at Vanderbilt University, he joined the Marines. He worked for the Nashville *Banner* before joining the *Constitution* in 1929. He covered Atlanta sports for nine years, then was named executive editor in 1938, editor in 1942 and publisher in 1960.

His column had appeared in the *Constitution* for 39 years. In 1958, a column entitled "A Church, A School," which denounced Southern racist and hate groups, won a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing. His book, *The South and the Southerner*, was published in 1964.

covered nuremberg trials

McGill covered Hitler's invasion of Austria, the Nuremberg war-crime trials and 18 national political conventions. He also contributed frequently to several periodicals and had an occasional book review in the *Saturday Review*.

Busy as he was, McGill sat and talked to the visiting newsmen and students as if he had nothing else to do. Whenever someone acted as if he wanted to leave, McGill would start talking about another picture or memento.

Three months later, Ralph Emerson McGill was dead. He was buried in Atlanta on what would have been his 71st birthday anniversary. He left a wife and a son, a chronicle of compassion and a legacy of enduring greatness.

Much of McGill's work concerned racial discrimination. He clung to two beliefs: Laws should be obeyed; men should do what they believed morally right.

Before 1954, when the separate-but-equal doctrine ruled the land, McGill believed in segregation because it was the law. However, in 1953—a year before the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation—McGill decided separate and equal were not compatible bedfellows. He wrote:

> Segregation by law no longer fits today's world. . . . Segregation is on its way out, and he who tries to tell people otherwise does them a great disservice. The problem of the future is how to live with the change.[1]

When segregationists still refused after 1954 to grant other human beings their rights, he descended on them quickly and fiercely: He contended that the continuing racist domination was based on fears "stemming from God knows what Freudian experiences or guilts."[2] He said Southerners must now "live by the law" and insisted, "It is no longer lawful to deprive a citizen of his rights."[3] Of the segregationists, he wrote:

> Some of the segregationist forces have for more than a year openly condemned their country, its government and its leaders and declared their hatred for it and their loyalty instead to a state and a leader. . . .
>
> We have grown used to seeing, on television and in news and magazine pictures, the hate—twisted faces of young men and women, and of their adult counterparts, crying out the most violent threats and expressing venom against their country, its courts and its authority.
>
> Hate knows no direction. The . . . rightwing extremist groups have disassociated themselves from their country.[4]

McGill believed several groups were responsible for the injustice accorded Southern blacks. Nine years after the separate-but-equal doctrine was reversed, he wrote:

> The decision of May, 1954, confined itself to schools. But it served to open up the entire spectrum of discrimination—education, jobs, inequality before the law, housing and voting rights.
>
> Extremism and discrimination have poisoned the nation and, more particularly, the South.[5]

A study of McGill's writings from 1954 until the day before he died indicates he blamed educators, churches, politicians, hate groups, merchants and Southern journalists. Of education, he said: "It had been separate. It had never been equal."[6]

It seemed appropriate that in one of his last columns in the Atlanta *Constitution* he appealed to the new secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Robert Finch, not to yield to Southern pressure to segregate schools. The most recent segregation device was hidden in a freedom-of-choice plan, which allowed children to choose the school they wanted to attend. McGill insisted pressure was placed on black parents to send their children only to all-black schools. Otherwise, "it might not be safe." The intimidated black parents usually catered to the wishes of the whites.

"The freedom-of-choice plan is, in fact, neither real freedom nor a choice," he wrote. "It is discrimination," adding:

> The problem of culturally deprived children increases. For some years it—the deprivation—has been exported to all major cities in the nation. The effects of the segregated school system, with its generations of discrimination against the poor—especially, but not altogether, the Negro poor—are starkly evident in every social problem we have today—ranging from children to adults.[7]

[1] *Time*, Dec. 14, 1953, p. 51.

[2] Ralph McGill, "Speaking Out," *Saturday Evening Post*, Sept. 30, 1961, p. 23.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] McGill, "Hate Knows No Direction," *Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 14, 1963, p. 18.

[5] McGill, "A Slow Decade of Painful Progress," *Saturday Review*, May 25, 1963, p. 11.

[6] McGill, "Speaking Out," *loc. cit.*

[7] Atlanta *Constitution*, Feb. 5, 1969, p. 1.

A later column, which was bordered in black several days after his death, further assailed the freedom-of-choice plan:

> Poor children are being shortchanged. Most of those being cheated are black—but not all.
>
> The freedom-of-choice plan is a fraud. It is a vehicle for cheating. I have seen too many freedom-of-choice schools. The all-white school—or the one with a few token freedom-of-choice black kids—has a good building. . . . It usually is accredited. . . . In the same town the all-Negro school . . . often is not accredited.[8]

'sacrifice of the children'

McGill called segregation and discrimination in Southern schools the "sacrifice of the children."[9] The segregationists, he said, were concerned only with separation of the races. Concern for children came second. The result was a continual downgrading in the educational process, because politicians rather than educators often were responsible for school plans. And he blamed educators for standing by and watching this happen:

> The cost continues. In my opinion it will be paid over and over for at least a generation to come, and it is perhaps fitting that it be borne nationally. But the South inevitably will pay the heavier share of it.[10]

In addition, he accused churches of supporting segregation and justifying it on the argument that blacks are inferior to whites. And he blamed the clergy for not taking the lead in attempting to end discrimination. He wrote:

> To send missionaries to colored peoples and then argue that because of the color of skin that two men may not worship the same God together is an impossible contradiction.[11]

But too few ministers had the courage to defy the extremists who always claimed they had God on their side. The few who did often found themselves without a pulpit.

McGill pointed specifically to church groups such as the Evangelical Christian Council, which declared integration was "satanic, unconstitutional, and one of the main objectives of the Communist party."[12]

Most Southern preachers, McGill said, were either neutral (meaning they lacked sufficient courage to speak against segregation) or "truth preachers" and spiritual albinos—those who believed in the Christian myth of white supremacy.

He also assailed pious church members who would screech and spit at tiny black children as they walked to school.

McGill strongly believed that Negro religious leadership was symbolized by men such as Dr. Martin Luther King, who engaged in nonviolent resistance against the right-wing extremists. McGill believed in and even encouraged sit-ins and strikes; participants "dynamited no churches, burned no buses, organized no mobs," he wrote.[13]

McGill, then, believed that the white religious community was hypocritical in its opposition to integration. He condemned the "hell fire and damnation" truth preachers. He condemned the neutral men of the cloth for not speaking out. He deplored white clergymen who believed in integration but remained silent.

McGill also blamed the old guard Southern politicians for the unhappy plight of the South. He wrote:

> Southern politics perhaps has been more consistently lacking in idealistic or progressive imagination and therefore has been more pragmatic than politics elsewhere.[14]

He blamed much of the lack of political imagination on those Southerners who had allowed conservative, right-wing political machines to develop since the late 19th century.

McGill criticized President Nixon for allowing Southern extremists such as Sen. Strom Thurmond to influence him:

> Senator Thurmond reportedly was the private voice which brought about retreat from the school guideline rule that denies federal funds to school systems that refuse to honestly desegregate. Such a backward step encourages widespread efforts to maintain discrimination masked by "freedom of choice" camouflage.[15]

He made no secret of the fact that he held little esteem for the senator from South Carolina. He called the Dixiecrat party, which Thurmond founded in 1948, "the most infamously hypocritical and intellectually dishonest political organization ever created," adding:

> While it sought to conceal its real motives with the cynical old shibboleth of states' rights, its real principles were those later espoused and practiced by the worst of the White Citizens Councils. Indeed, many of the Dixiecrat leaders became the chief organizers and supporters of these councils.[16]

McGill contended that much of the present racial problem could easily be attributed to the South's political leadership of the present and past. He saw little promise in the South's political future unless a new national party emerged to destroy the narrow, sectional selfishness of Southern politicians.

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[8] *Ibid.*, Feb. 8, 1969, p. 1.

[9] McGill, *The South and the Southerner* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1964), p. 241.

[10] McGill, "A Slow Decade of Painful Progress," *loc. cit.*

[11] *Time*, *loc. cit.*

[12] McGill, *The South and the Southerner*, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

[14] McGill, "The Angry South," *Atlantic*, April, 1956, p. 31.

[15] Atlanta *Constitution*, Jan. 30, 1969, p. 1.

[16] McGill, *The South and the Southerner*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

It is late. But there is yet time

The Ku Klux Klan, White Citizens Councils and other Southern hate groups were not far removed from Southern political demagogues in McGill's view, and he attacked them with fury:

> One of the lamentable developments of the new southern conservatism has been the prostitution of the Confederate flag: Hoodlums, Klan elements, White Citizens Councils and dynamiters of churches and schools.
>
> Southern conservative extremist groups . . . have persistently sought to distort the meaning and intent of equal citizenship rights by insisting that it invades the field of private social life, and attempts to legislate morality.[17]

McGill's most noted assault on the hate groups was in "A Church, A School," for which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize:

> The Confederacy and the men who led it are revered by millions. Its leaders returned to the Union and urged that the future be committed to building a stronger America. This was particularly true of General Robert E. Lee. Time after time he urged his students at Washington University to forget the War Between the States and to help build a greater and stronger union.
>
> For too many years now we have seen the Confederate flag and the emotions of that great war become the property of men not fit to tie the shoes of those who fought for it. Some of these have been merely childish and immature. Others have perverted and commercialized the flag by making the stars and bars, and the Confederacy itself, a symbol of hate and bombings.
>
> For a long time now it has been needful for all Americans to stand up and be counted on the side of law and the due process of law—even when to do so goes against personal beliefs and emotions. It is late. But there is yet time.[18]

He also used the opportunity to take an embittered pot shot at the "hate preachers":

> This too is a harvest of those so-called Christian ministers who have chosen to preach hate instead of compassion. Let them now find pious words and raise their hands in deploring the bombing of a synagogue.[19]

The hypocrisy of the organizers of the new Ku Klux Klan in the early 20th Century was used by McGill to attack the "Invisible Empire" and related groups. He said William J. Simmons, who organized the Klan in 1915, was nothing more than a drunken dreamer. The hate, hidden to most by the mysticism of Klan robes, was not concealed from McGill. He often assailed the hate-imposed violence by exposing specific acts of violence. He said:

> The fact that the anti-Negro rights forces have always included a heavy strain of anti-Semitism made it easier for those of a mind and will so to do to expose the old Typhoid Marys of the hate business who were operating in the climate created by the Klan and their white collar contemporaries. No matter what new, high-sounding patriotic names they gave to their new traps for suckers, it was possible for the diligent to expose them. Life had an added zest for those who could laugh at the absurdity of its rituals and titles, who could feel compassion for the men whose lives were so sterile they felt themselves men only when they were robed and masked and in the presence of phony mysteries of the order, and who could see and expose the contradiction in the Klan's claims to Americanism and its subversion of American principles, and who knew the cover it gave to scoundrels.[20]

After Dr. King's death, McGill, in a column entitled "Many Fingers on the Trigger," said a conspiracy against King did not exist. Rather, his death was caused by "the long accumulation of many previous violent attacks against him and the many brutalities unleashed against him . . . had come from a sick element of white society."[21]

a substitute for will rogers

McGill sometimes wrote with humor about conservative groups, but it did not conceal his contempt for them. Of Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society, he said:

> It has been a long time since we had a stand-up comic like Will Rogers. There isn't one now. But until a replacement is found, Mr. Robert Welch . . . will substitute moderately well as a maker of humorous remarks.[22]

Although McGill deplored the narrow-minded hate groups and the violence caused by their shallow understanding of humanity, he understood them.

Of the extremist Southerner, who might very well have called McGill a "nigger lover" the day before, the Southern journalist said:

> The average southerner with a deep sense of injustice is not a "bad" man. He wants to be liked. He wants it understood he loves his country—and he does, as he has proved in war and peace. But at present he feels that his country does not love him. And he is sad, angry, resentful and defiant.
>
> Many of these people are sincere. . . . They will die before they will agree, they say. And they mean it.[23]

[17]McGill, "A Case for the Southern Progressive," *Saturday Review*, June 13, 1964, p. 17.
[18]Atlanta *Constitution*, Feb. 5, 1969, p. 1.
[19]*Ibid.*
[20]McGill, *The South and the Southerner*, *loc. cit.*
[21]Atlanta *Constitution*, Feb. 1, 1969, p. 1.
[22]*Ibid.*, Jan. 30, 1969, p. 1.
[23]McGill, "The Angry South," *loc. cit.*

McGill also put into words what he had practiced during his 40 years as a Southern journalist:

> The southern newspaper editor or writer of any sensitivity who knows his people will not, though he disagrees with them, mock or denounce them. It is part of his duty personally and professionally, since he knows the path his region has taken to seek in every way to ameliorate the problem, knowing it cannot be solved. Persons of good will will keep on ameliorating them until finally they cease to be major problems.[24]

The fact that a black customer could purchase everything in a store "except a sandwich and coffee" (referring to white-only cafes) was to McGill "the most preposterous of discriminations."[25]

exploitation decried

In addition to deploring those merchants who would take money from blacks with one hand while refusing them service with the other, McGill often took out after industry for exploiting the Negro. He pointed specifically to low wages, poor working conditions and fly-by-night operators with phony training programs, which he called excuses to pay low wages.

Following reversal of the separate-but-equal doctrine, McGill said of Southern newspapers:

> Most Southern newspapers have taken the position that the less said about desegregation the better—on the theory that if you don't talk about something you dislike you'll wake up one morning and find that it has gone away.[26]

From this, one can safely conclude that McGill distributed the blame for racism and bigotry. But he always presented the other side, no matter how unjust and invalid it might have seemed to him.

He pointed out that certain Southern elements thought that if schools were desegregated the educational level of classrooms would decline. That assumption was based on the proposition that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites. To them, he said that if education must be separate, it must be equal. And he said blacks were getting inferior libraries, classrooms and teachers and were using outdated books. After the 1954 decision, he warned the extremists that the law must be obeyed.

To those who said "let the Negro show initiative and responsibility before he can vote," McGill said, "the black is just as capable as you of voting." And he called the proposition "even more preposterous than the argument that the Negro is incapable of learning."[27]

He pointed out that much of the fear of blacks was the fear that blacks and whites would intermarry. But McGill could not even begin to understand why they would worry about it.

After McGill's death, obituary writers called him "the conscience of the South." The phrase was overused and became trite. Because he constantly told his beloved Southland it was wrong and if it did not change it would be punished, he was its conscience. But Ralph Emerson McGill was much more than just that. He reminded Southerners that they consistently and repeatedly had refused to grant other human beings their rightful dignity and their lawful rights. He was a consistent advocate of decency and humanity for all people.

Even in the 1940s, when he was advocating separate-but-equal facilities for the blacks, he emphasized the "equal." He warned Southerners that unless they provided truly equal facilities for blacks, "the Supreme Court will be forced to invade the field."[28] Nobody listened. So, in 1954, after the Supreme Court was forced to guarantee equal opportunities for all Americans by integrating schools, McGill told Southerners that the law was the law and they must respect it. When certain Southern elements refused to obey the law, he scolded them.

McGill understood his people. He understood why they felt the way they did. But he told them they were wrong. In this sense, McGill was the eloquent Southern conscience.

If, as a prophet of doom and an evangelist of human rights, he was expected to change the bigotry and racism in the South with his writings, then he failed. But if, in the tradition of other courageous editors before him, he is judged on his lonely valor and desire to see a better America, he succeeded.

McGill agitated and made those who read him think. Few heeded his advice but many Southerners reacted with anger. At least, as McGill said, he was being read.

"The original volcanoes are already extinct or more so," he wrote in 1963. "There is much to be done. But it will be done."[29] Indeed, angry minds sometimes are troubled minds, and "troubled minds are a sign of change."[30]

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[24] *Ibid.*

[25] McGill, speech to the 1960 Lovejoy Convention, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, *Vital Speeches*, Dec. 15, 1960, p. 134.

[26] *Time*, June 17, 1955, p. 67.

[27] McGill, "Speaking Out," *op. cit.*, Sept. 30, 1961, p. 13.

[28] Cal M. Logue, "Ralph McGill: Convictions of a Southern Editor," *Journalism Quarterly*, Winter, 1968, p. 648.

[29] McGill, "Where We Stand: Emancipation," *Look*, Jan. 15, 1963, p. 72.

[30] McGill, *The South and the Southerner*, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

THE FEARFUL PRICE OF ORTHODOXY: THE PRESS AND THE UNIVERSITY

By *NATHAN B. BLUMBERG*

Professor Blumberg delivered the inaugural address last October in the University of Montana Interdisciplinary Lecture Series sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences. This report, which presents a portion of his concluding remarks, explores and expands the concept of the "orthodox" press—a concept he has developed in articles in the 1968 and 1969 issues of Montana Journalism Review. *The articles, "A Study of the 'Orthodox' Press: The Reporting of Dissent" and "The 'Orthodox' Media Under Fire: Chicago and the Press," have been widely quoted and reprinted.*

My current research has produced a corollary to the doctrine of the "orthodox" and "unorthodox" press, and the proposition reads like this: Colleges and universities share with the news media in many similar ways the blame for failing to fulfill their historical and social obligations and therefore are similarly responsible for the depth of our most serious problems.

All of us are aware that many of our fellow citizens think the university should be an ivory tower where the concerns of the workaday world are not allowed to intrude and that the press shouldn't "stir things up" or be too "nosey." They maintain that the university should grind out graduates who are cogs for the wheels of industry, well-adjusted accountants and salesmen for the world of business, technically competent hacks for the newsrooms and networks, trainees for the conglomerates of the seventies and lovely young things who will settle in the suburbs and produce two-and-two-thirds children. In effect, they hold that education should not enlighten and broaden and liberate young men and women but actually should narrow and limit the range of their knowledge and understanding. They contend that the news media should not explore the seamier sides of our affluent society. This is a view also held by many academicians and by many owners and executives of the news media. As a result, consciously or unconsciously, they have sought to utilize silence as a social lubricant, with obviously devastating results.

The physician does not seek to heal by ignoring either the symptoms or the disease itself; the pus that oozes from the sores on the body of the United States—our poverty, our bigotry, our brutality, our corruption and, most despicable of all, our hypocrisy—will not simply go away. Problems that admittedly were difficult 10 or 20 years ago have grown to such enormous dimensions that even crash programs could not solve them for years to come. If there is one immutable lesson of recent history for the news media and our colleges and universities, it is that this system of government ultimately will fall or be saved by the honest facing of our many problems. To stick one's head in the sand displays not one's wisdom but one's buttocks.

Ironically, those who do not want universities or the press to probe our problems often are those who most emphatically deplore the young men and women who seek a way apart from a society that reeks of alcohol, that glorifies the fast buck, that promotes tranquilizers, sedatives and an infinite variety of mood-altering pills to enable millions to tolerate their environment, their lives and themselves.

The Thoreauvian path taken by growing numbers of our young people seems to infuriate those who want others to live by values that palpably have failed to satisfy even themselves. Never has it been more true, in the words of Disraeli, that the dominant philosophy in any age is always the philosophy that is on the way out.

Obviously, a university should be a place where orderly evolution is possible. That is the essence of a scholarly enclave devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. But the fact is that students discovered that universities more and more in recent years have placed undergraduate concerns, undergraduate needs and, indeed, undergraduate rights behind other considerations, most notably the pursuit of funds from foundations and taxpayers' dollars from Washington in the form of what are euphemistically called grants.

As one who has been fighting a losing battle for 19 years against the encroachments of the federal government on

campuses of both state institutions of higher learning and private colleges and universities, I am appalled at the noose federal agencies and the bureaucrats have dropped and are tightening around the eager and willing heads of our colleges and universities. And do not forget that it was the students, not the faculties, who first protested against certain kinds of research being done on campuses for the military and for secret or secretive agencies. The moral thrust for most reforms long overdue on our campuses has come from the students, not the faculties.

It is, it seems to me, a statement of fact that universities and colleges in Montana, as elsewhere, have failed to fulfill their historical obligations as centers where scholars convene to search for truths and report those truths. The cases in which professors have been persecuted, harassed or fired because of their academic convictions or their scholarly writings are no more or less numerous here than in many other states, but the distinguishing fact is that so little has been done in some of the most critical areas crying out for study and research.

Excluded from this charge are some of this faculty's courageous scientists who have persisted in their moral and academic obligations to report information to the public despite pressures by the most ruthless segments of the political and economic power structure in this state and elsewhere. But included in this charge are those members of the academic community anywhere who have failed to explore areas of legitimate scholarly and public concern because they feared the reaction of those who might be offended. The time is long past due, for example, for pertinent research into several areas of our political structure.

copper collars

It is especially important in Montana because this territory became a state under the political domination of the copper kings, and its legislatures have been largely controlled and its courts unquestionably corrupted by powerful corporations that have placed selfish gain and private profit before the legitimate concerns of the general public.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that laws passed by Montana legislatures and the interpretations of those laws—with remarkable and infrequent exceptions—have favored the large corporations which extract millions of dollars every year from the natural resources and from state residents. And let it be noted, so that all of us fully understand the extent of the current situation, that the lobbyists of at least one public utility have clearly demonstrated in legislature after legislature—including the last one—that they can kill any bill the officials of that company set their hearts and minds to killing. Since the legislature of Montana is so structured as to make it easy to defeat new legislation and difficult to pass new legislation, those corporations that already have an extremely favorable situation are sitting pretty, but the rest of us necessarily experience our multiple biennial frustrations.

Similarly, one could hope that the business community might be subjected to the same kind of scrutiny applied by the School of Journalism to the performance, conscience and quality of the news media.

Furthermore, for another example, all schools of law should be part of that extraordinarily heartening group of law schools—among the best in the United States—whose professors now are stressing the role of laws as instruments of justice in our society and not merely "teaching the law" as for decades past. Outside Montana, we already see scores of young lawyers who care deeply about the social, economic and—verily—the legal injustices committed daily both in and out of our courtrooms. The revolt in the last two weeks of the young lawyers in the very citadel of "law and order," the office of Attorney General John Mitchell, is only the most recent manifestation that the American Bar Association will not always be what it unfortunately is and has been. It is not amiss to note that every student in this university was born at a time when the law of the land was the barbaric doctrine of "separate but equal" facilities for many of our fellow citizens, and it was a law that had been certified by a Supreme Court of the nineteenth century.

Another proposition that has emerged from my continuing study of the structure and performance of the American press is this: Newspapers do not reflect their environments; environments reflect their newspapers.

I already have written that Chicago might not have a Mayor Daley if it had a St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* and that it would not have some of its other problems if it did not have a Chicago *Tribune*. Would southern California be the dreadful land it is if it had something considerably better than the Copley press? Do not Indianapolis and Phoenix show clearly the effects of Pulliam papers? Conversely, does not Denver mirror in large measure the strengths and weaknesses of the Denver *Post*? And so forth. And Montana. . . .

Let us look briefly at Montana as a microcosm of what happens to an environment when its journalism is significantly altered. Until 10 years ago four of the five largest daily newspapers in the state operated under news and editorial policies that did everything possible to limit disclosure of information and discussion of issues. The fifth only rarely rocked the boat and the remaining papers did little or nothing to unsettle the status quo. Public officials conducted much of their business in private, scandal was suppressed and anything embarrassing was swiftly swept under private rugs. Rumor and gossip were the fruits of the grapevine that stretched across the state. But with the sale of the Anaconda daily newspapers to the Lee Newspapers—by far the greatest single act of public service the Anaconda Company ever performed for the state of Montana—and subsequently the sale of the Great Falls *Tribune* and *Leader* to the Cowles interests, an incredible revolution was under way in the Montana political scene. Pub-

lic officials have been forced, often quite reluctantly, to realize that the good old days were gone, that suppression of news of public concern had been ended. The same realization applied to corporations and unions and boards and private individuals who were engaged in matters of legitimate public interest. This is not intended to suggest that we have achieved a political or journalistic millennium in Montana; on the contrary, the faculty of the School of Journalism continues to be highly critical of the performance and policies of the Great Falls *Tribune*, the Lee Newspapers and other publications in the state.

The difference—the crucial difference—is that the thrust of these newspapers is toward creating an improved environment in every sense of that word. And although their accomplishments are not all that some of us might wish, they are nonetheless significant. The impressive list would have to include the exposure of the Cheadle case at the Montana State Prison and subsequent reporting of events and developments there; persistent coverage of other state institutions; the extraordinary coverage of the 1969 state legislature, including the activities of some of the lobbyists; beginning explorations of corporate influence on the legislative and executive branches of government; vigorous and intelligent reporting of air and stream pollution, which of course makes possible the actions being undertaken to do something about these environmental cancers; articles on conflicts of interest involving elected and appointed officials—articles that, among other things, already have brought some resignations of attorneys on state retainers; a revealing series on the amount of tax money being spent on public relations by state agencies; some perceptive reporting and analyses of what is going on within the political parties at the local and state levels; some exceptional reporting on the Montana delegations to the national political conventions, and so forth.

The coverage and commentary, from all signs, will continue to improve. We are moving swiftly toward an open society for the first time in the history of this state, and that, I suggest, is a monumental achievement for which journalists at least constructed a solid base.

Thus, in this brief commentary I have attempted to summarize portions of a work in progress. It has been said that a journalist spends the first half of his life writing about things he does not understand, and the second half writing about things he understands only too well. It is the same with a professor.

But the professor often must wonder whether he searches the seas in vain—or in vanity, or in desperation—finally to turn from the seas to the skies in some solitary certainty that he will find that crack between two worlds—the world of the diableros and the world of living men. Melville was gripped by the glorious vision:

> "Oh, Ahab!" cried Starbuck, "not too late is it, even now, the third day, to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!"

Yet there are things each of us must do, and it seems evident that the professors and the journalists—the universities and the press—share a common burden. It is they who are primarily responsible for educating the citizenry in a free society. What I have attempted to suggest is that both the universities and the press should be doing a much better job. It may be a suggestion that offends some people, but I do not fear the barricades. There are, after all, hazards in all professions.

The Butte Free Press Revisited

The building that housed the old Butte *Free Press* is now a jewelry store. A clerk showed me through it, and I was amazed how time just seemed to have stopped when the newspaper was discontinued. The big equipment was removed long ago, but remnants of the *Free Press* are there. In the basement is the dolly used to move newsprint. On the top floor—the composing room—are pulleys, wires and copy baskets. Three 1929 calendars are still on the wall. One shows all the months, but the others have been left at May. Tacked on one wall is a note giving the order in which the comics were to appear. Two mats are affixed to the banister on the stairway to the third floor. One is an editorial page, the other a classified page. Expensive gems glitter in a building that once smelled of paste pots and printer's ink.

—Excerpt from a letter from Barbara Mittal, a 1963 graduate of the Montana School of Journalism. Miss Mittal is a copyreader for the Great Falls *Tribune*.

'QUARTZ UPON THE BRAIN': A NEWSPAPER FOR MONTANA MINERS

By *WARREN J. BRIER*

Professor Brier, a member of the University of Montana journalism faculty since 1962, became dean of the School of Journalism July 1, 1968. He has taught at San Diego State College and the University of Southern California and has worked for the Associated Press, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer *and the Seattle* Times. *His book* Writing for Newspapers and News Services, *coauthored with Howard C. Heyn of the Associated Press, was published in 1969. Another book,* The Frightful Punishment: Con Orem and Montana's Great Glove Fights of the 1860s, *also was published last year.*

A sturdy character I note,
That daily strikes our view,
He loves to rove in paths remote
From folly's aimless crew;
His prying sight scans every height
And pierces every plain;
For, as the mining parlance goes,
He has quartz upon the brain.[1]

So began what the Virginia City *Montana Post* termed in 1865 "The New Local Song." The editor of the first newspaper in Montana Territory also had "quartz upon the brain," for the *Post* consistently and voluminously presented news stories, editorials, letters and Territorial laws concerning mining from its first issue, Aug. 27, 1864, to its final one, June 11, 1869.

Just as it could be said that the *Montana Post* was essentially a Vigilante newspaper, it could be argued that it was primarily a mining newspaper.[2] A line at the top of page one proclaimed it was devoted to the Territory's mineral interests. The owner and founder, John Buchanan, vowed that the concerns of the miner would be looked after carefully, and the promise was fulfilled.

"We will have correspondents in the various mining camps who will keep our readers well posted in all that is going on in the different parts of our now young and rapidly growing Territory," Buchanan said. "The markets and prices current will be carefully revised and reported each week."

Gold had spurred the sudden surge to Montana and gold, contended the editor, would ensure a dazzling future for the Territory. Buchanan commented in the first issue that

> no richer diggings exist, we believe, anywhere than are found in our gulches, while rich quartz leads abound through our Territory. The amount of precious metal existing in these leads will not be known for hundreds of years; for none can estimate the period when they will be exhausted. . . . Many persons are taking out $150 per day to the hand. We were shown a nugget taken out at the Summit, worth $700—a beautiful specimen.[3]

Despite such optimism, Buchanan did not try to hide what he called the other side of the picture. While scores of men earned fortunes quickly, hundreds labored for months without finding gold. Moreover, newcomers—pilgrims—learned that the only available claims were far from the gold camps. Claims could be purchased, but the prices usually were prohibitive. Consequently, most pilgrims in 1865 and 1866 worked for $6 a day in gold, equal to $12 in greenbacks. Food and lodging cost $1 a day. Said Buchanan:

> Many persons arriving here, not finding nuggets of gold on the pine trees, and finding mining very hard work, and they not fairly able to compete with old miners, become discouraged and return home. This, we think, is folly, as there is no need of any person being out of employment who makes the effort to obtain it, and that too at good rates.[4]

Much of the editorial material about mining was of a

[1]Virginia City *Montana Post*, Feb. 25, 1865, 1:3.

[2]The editor occasionally referred to the *Montana Post* as "the Miners' Newspaper." See, for example, June 8, 1867, 8:1.

[3]Aug. 27, 1864, 3:3.

[4]*Ibid.*

public-service nature—mining laws and detailed descriptions of the many gulches. Before the first Territorial legislature met in late 1864, miners were governed by a Territory of Idaho act "relating to the discovery of gold and silver quartz leads and of the manner of their location." The *Post*, furnished a copy of the statute by Judge William Y. Lovell, published it in the first issue and noted it would govern discovery of quartz leads in Montana.

Mining districts could enact local laws, and the newspaper was eager to publish them, having been requested to do so by several miners. It asked the recorders of mining districts to provide copies for publication; many did, and the newspaper often preceded the lengthy regulations with comments such as, "We publish today, on our fourth page, the mining laws of Fairweather District. To give every miner a chance to have a copy, we have struck off a few extra copies, which can be had at the City Book Store."

gulches described

Hundreds of columns were devoted to descriptions of the gulches, for such accounts dramatized to Eastern capitalists and prospective miners the opportunities awaiting them in Montana and informed miners and financiers in the Territory about the status of mining activity.

The second issue contained the names and locations of several quartz lodes "printed through the kindness of our gentlemanly recorder, R. M. Hagaman, Esq." Thereafter, the newspaper included extended descriptions written by correspondents at the gulches. For example, at Prickly Pear, 115 miles northwest of Virginia, "Nat" regularly told about discoveries and opportunities in the region. Such accounts may well have been overstated, and the editor had no feasible way to check their accuracy.

Of continuing importance to the editor[5] was the reaction of Easterners to the Montana gold rush. In July, 1866, the newspaper said it hoped every quartz mill in the Territory would be running in time to furnish returns to the East, adding:

> It is important that the favorable opinions of capitalists should receive confirmation. New companies will then be organized and new investments made, and the Territory will commence the year 1867 under influences more favorable to its growth and prosperity than ever before.
>
> Suspension of labor by any of the mills in running condition for any cause at this time will excite the suspicion of Eastern capitalists, as they cannot know of any other cause than that of absolute failure, for such suspension—and will refer all different explanations to their Colorado experience during the past three years.[6]

Reports of recent strikes and accounts of impressive specimens were proven methods to stimulate the interest of Easterners. Such information was displayed prominently, often with lengthy lead-in lines that served as a kind of headline of the mid-1860s:

> RICH QUARTZ LEADS RECENTLY DISCOVERED NEAR VIRGINIA CITY.—A friend has just shown us a rich piece of quartz taken from a lead he has recently discovered. It has not yet been essayed but we predict will be one of the richest yet discovered. Pitch in, boys. Our mountains are full of gold and silver belonging to the lucky man.[7]

And:

> STAMPEDE TO THE YELLOWSTONE.—The news of the discovery of a rich gulch on the Yellowstone spread through our town like wild-fire, and a very extensive stampede has been the consequence. We counted twenty packers in one group. Verily this is a marvellous country, and its riches are only guessed at. The indications are that gold will be found in paying quantities in scores of places where it now lies unsuspected. A great future is opening out for this Territory of Montana.[8]

In that same issue, the newspaper told about a nugget worth $475. It had been brought from the Yellowstone by a Dr. Hunter, who said the men who had given it to him had other nuggets worth several hundred dollars. Nuggets often were brought to the *Post* office to be displayed. Such an exhibit usually merited a squib:

> We have in our office a specimen taken from the Lesher lode on Granite Creek, four miles from Virginia [City]. Mr. Lesher, the lucky discoverer, tells us that out of one half ounce of ore he has taken ten cents. If the quartz averages as well as the prospects have, this lode will be one of the richest in our Territory.[9]

Prize nuggets received prominent coverage on the locals page. Miners at Nelson Gulch found a seven-and-a-third-pound specimen valued at $2,000. The largest Alder Gulch nugget, however, weighed slightly more than 15 pounds. The *Post* reported its discovery this way:

> The largest nugget ever found in Montana, and we believe in the Rocky Mountains, was found by a man named Yager on J. McEvily & Co.'s claim in Fairweather District near the upper edge of town a few mornings ago. We did not see it weighed, but are informed the exact weight is FIFTEEN POUNDS AND TWO

[5]The *Post* had three permanent editors—Thomas J. Dimsdale, Henry M. Blake and James H. Mills—and three temporary editors. The exact dates on which the editors' duties began and ended often are difficult to determine, for their names frequently did not appear in the masthead until weeks after they had been hired. Examination of the newspaper and of articles about the permanent editors indicates they served for the following periods: Dimsdale, Sept. 10, 1864-Aug. 24, 1866; Blake, Aug. 25, 1866-Dec. 28, 1866; Mills, Dec. 29, 1866-June 11, 1869. John Buchanan was listed as editor for the first two issues, Aug. 27 and Sept. 3, 1864. H. N. Maguire served as editor during the latter half of 1865 while Dimsdale was completing his history of the Vigilantes and traveling on business for the *Post*. Maguire's association with the newspaper ended Jan. 1, 1866. E. W. Carpenter was editor from early August to Oct. 23, 1868, while Mills was visiting in the East.

[6]July 14, 1866, 2:1-2.

[7]Sept. 3, 1864, 3:4.

[8]Sept. 24, 1864, 3:1.

[9]Oct. 1, 1864, 3:1.

> OUNCES. It is of remarkable purity, containing no quartz and very little base alloy, oblong in shape with a shoulder like projection near one end. It is washed very smooth and is believed to have come from a great distance above. Several parties wished to secure it at its weight valuation, but Mr. Mc. refuses to part with it. . . . It is the intention to have it forwarded to the States at an early day. . . . The nugget can be seen at Mr. McEvily's residence during the day. *Quid rides?*[10]

Much news space was devoted to trumpeting the continued prosperity of Alder Gulch. One story, for example, announced, "BIG STRIKES STILL MADE IN ALDER." The editor said that those who thought the palmy days of Alder Gulch were numbered were decidedly mistaken, adding: "The amount of gold still taken therefrom is immense; and, in instances, the yield of claims is enormous."

Such optimism led rather naturally to statements that (more than a century later) seem exaggerated: "Gold is, less or more, scattered through every gulch." And: "We have an inexhaustible wealth in our gold and silver lodes."

The slowdown of mining as winter neared invariably was described in detail. Thomas J. Dimsdale periodically would stroll down the gulch, then report what he had viewed: "The extreme cold notwithstanding, mining goes bravely on, and gold is the result in fabulous quantities."

Although open claims could be worked until January, December snows and sub-zero temperatures usually prompted stories that began, "Mining in the gulch has almost ceased entirely."

Stories often told about miners who had been trapped in blizzards. Many of them froze, but many also survived and returned to tell the editor harrowing tales that "carry a thrill of horror to every breast." One such account about a miner in a storm between Ten-Mile Creek and Horse Prairie referred to "his feet hanging to him like masses of ice" and said "you could have knocked off his toes like glass." On another occasion, the editor noted the temperature at Horse Prairie was estimated at 57 degrees below zero—so cold "a brass monkey wouldn't stand a ghost of a chance."

technical advice printed

Much advice of a technical nature was carried on page one.[11] One article, for example, explained in detail how to identify and test clay that could be used as fire brick in the "erection of fire-proof vaults, arches for steam works, furnaces for the smelting of argentiferous galena and copper ores." Others described the silver-smelting process and the Wykoff Process to reduce and desulphurize ore.

[10]May 18, 1867, 8:3.

[11]The *Post* received several mining publications, including the San Francisco *Mining and Scientific Press*, Philadelphia *Railroad and Mining Journal*, Central City (Col.) *Miner's Register*, London *Mining Journal*, New York *American Journal of Mining*, San Francisco *Journal of Mining*, New York *American Mining Index*, Hillyer's *United States Mining Journal*, and the Pittsburgh *Mining and Manufacturing Journal*.

The *Post's* editorials often emphasized political controversies that involved mining matters. At first, miners worked without restrictions. Local laws subsequently were formulated. Later, Territorial status brought comprehensive laws and the scope and nature of those statutes became political issues.

As early as Oct. 1, 1864, the *Post* advised readers to "look well to the persons nominated for members of our Legislative assembly [for] we want to have our tax laws and mining laws modified." It continued:

> We regard the present quartz mining law as a conspiracy against the development of our mining resources and a well-defined effort to legislate against all persons now in the Territory and in favor of no one here or elsewhere.
>
> If we are compelled, in one year, to perform one hundred dollars worth of labor on each claim we own, nobody will desire to own claims on undeveloped lodes, and no one will take the risk of developing them. This, the greatest interest we have, must be fostered by wise legislation, and the demand for a change in the existing law, we are happy to say, is unanimous.[12]

The editor said that requirement carried a penalty greater than the fine for a severe assault and contended a law that forced a miner to spend "one hundred dollars or hand over his claim to some white-shirted, gold-chained, musk-scented or dust-freighted land-shark" was absurd and wicked. Let the man who benefits the country reap the harvest, the newspaper said. Give him a secure title and there soon would be unearthed a "wealth of mineral resources which will be the wonder of the world." A contrary policy, however, would do infinite mischief.

Dissatisfaction with the mining laws in late 1864 became a theme in the editorial columns. The editor argued repeatedly for a "thorough, simple and practical mining code" and insisted one be drafted and passed without delay. Failure to obtain such a law would lead to a return of club and revolver times. More specifically, the editor suggested repeal of all Idaho mining statutes and substitution of a new code for the Territory. Replacement of certain Idaho laws and maintenance of others had "opened a floodgate through which uncertainty and litigation will continually flow."

Gov. Sidney Edgerton discussed the mining laws in his opening speech to the first Legislature, and the *Post*, in an article entitled "What the Miners Expect from the Legislature," commented:

> Now the one thing paramount in Montana is mining; and this is a subject which is perhaps more fruitful of litigation than any other; especially after a few years of bargains and sales have complicated interests. Even now we see the groundwork of a superstructure of fraud, which, unless swept away by wholesome legislation, will greatly mar the prospects of our Territory. The "stake law" would be ridiculous, if it were not gravely pernicious and flagrantly unjust. The Idaho statutes provide that a stake like an over-grown stove-pipe should in all cases mark the claim. . . . To insist that a man should

[12]Oct. 1, 1864, 2:1.

Mining bill termed a monstrous wrong

> go 20 or 30 miles for what he cannot carry one mile if he gets it, is absurd. It is about as ridiculous to attempt the finding of such a stake, in many places, and the carriage of it about as hopeful of success as the extraction of sunbeams from cucumbers.[13]

The first Montana Legislature replaced the Idaho statutes with a simplified, more readable law. In 12 brief sections, it remedied most of the so-called evils to which the *Post* had objected. It made a miner's claim real property by the mere act of recording that claim. It forbade claim jumping and an undue extension of claims from the original discovery. Said the editor, "We are happy to realize a beginning of the end proposed—viz: justice to miners."

In the following months, however, wily miners found loopholes in the statutes. For example, they seemed to encourage idle claims and that prompted the newspaper to reverse its stand on unworked claims. In July, 1865, it declared that any law permitting speculators to hold claims without working them was a robbery of the community and a detriment to the public interest. The only true claim was a pick and shovel with a man behind them, the editor now argued.

Within days, the miners at Summit passed a law that all claims not worked by the 10th of the month would be jumpable. That action was praised by the *Post*, which took credit for it. What still was needed, however, was a Territorial law to make pick-and-shovel representation a part of the title to the claim. The forthcoming Legislature could do that and the editor hoped it would. He commented:

> The Summiteers are wise in their generation and have the honor of setting a good example. Let us be able to boast of a democratic country where the poor man is not barred from enterprise by the weight of the influence of capital or outraged by a paper title representing nothing but lazy cupidity.[14]

When a U.S. senator contended the lodes of western mining regions should be sold by the federal government—as it sold public land—the *Post* termed the proposal a conspiracy and said:

> Of course the passage of such a glorious ordinance would flood our country with speculators who would buy over our heads in spite of us, and the prettiest little game of national freeze-out that ever the world saw played would terminate in the ruin of the Territories and the beggary of the inhabitants.[15]

The proposal gained favor in the East, however, and the newspaper started its longest and most obdurate crusade on behalf of Montana's miners. It called the move an intimation that another assault would be made on the miners' purses and property by "the greedy and unscrupulous among the Eastern men in Congress." Labeling the proposal an example of "aristocracy of capital," the newspaper began a series of lengthy editorials typified by this excerpt:

> The survey and sale of mineral lands is a most shocking absurdity. Who can tell their value till they are worked? Who can fix their limits till their existence is demonstrated by discovery and defined by development?
>
> A poor prospector frequently, nay, generally toils for long and weary years without doing more than keeping of body and soul together; at last he strikes something rich; but no sooner would his cheek flush with joy at the prospect of a reward for all his labor, suffering and privation than a painfully barbered, perfumed, patent-leathered and broad-cloth-enveloped official would shout: "Ho, such an one! turn in hither; that's Uncle Sam's, only he didn't know it. Come and buy it of me; or, if you have no money, get out! I guess I'll take it myself."
>
> If our mines must be made productive to the country, to an extent even greater than at present, let the Government tax the produce of our labor; but to sell the mineral lands and destroy the very motive which urges men to endure the hardships of the mountain life would be a policy both nefarious and suicidal. All our gold goes East, in due time. We found the gold for carrying on the war. We must, in the end, pay the national debt. Alder Gulch alone has contributed $30,000,000 to the national resources. Is not that enough?
>
> Our country has a brilliant career before it, unless some meddling political fools, having organs of "causality" about the size of a clover seed and organs of "acquisitiveness" like the halves of an orange, interfere by unwholesome legislation, restrain our efforts, arrest our progress and repress our energy.[16]

In March, 1866, the proposal was incorporated in a bill, evoking the *Post* opinion that congressmen know no more about mining claims than a mountain sheep does about a Greek lexicon. The editor pointed out that quartz lies in veins that are parallel, contiguous and overlapping. To subdivide the land into 20-acre lots, as the bill would do, would mean the owner could control one or more veins and others would not be able to work in the area. Consequently, the bill was regarded as absurd, a senseless outrage, a monstrous wrong, absolute nonsense and a measure whose author surely must have been joking.

tax advocated

The newspaper noted that "one lot may be cheap at $1,000,000 and another may be dear at twenty cents." The

[13]Dec. 24, 1864, 2:1.
[14]July 8, 1865, 2:1.
[15]July 22, 1865, 2:1.
[16]Dec. 16, 1865, 2:1.

better procedure, advocated repeatedly in editorials, would be to tax the miners' produce.

If the bill were passed, great confusion would ensue in instances where lodes crossed, the newspaper said, adding:

> We trust that the Legislature will tell the meddlesome twenty-acre-lot boobies to dissolve themselves forthwith. A committee of Fejee [*sic*] Islanders, called on to investigate and report on the best pattern for naval chronometers, could not show their entire want of information more than this obtuse and addle-headed body. . . . It would be only commonly honest to permit those who are not in possession to hold what they have got. For future discoveries, make a new rule, if it be needed. Anything else is nothing but statutable robbery, and would be appropriately named, "An act for the ruin of miners and western men in general, and for the confiscation of their discoveries."[17]

As the *Post* continued to criticize the measure, the editor slowly worked out a plan that seemed to resolve the newspaper's contradictory stands concerning idle claims. He suggested an act that would permit a man to stake a claim and not work it from November 1 to the following May 1. Thereafter, the right to an unworked claim would lapse and the claim would be forfeited to the Territory to be sold at auction by the gulch recorder "on due notice thereof posted on the ground." Exceptions would include claims that were not worked because of sickness, flood, justifiable and necessary absence and inclement weather.

The newspaper also recommended that one claim in each discovery should be set aside for the benefit of the common schools—"the same to be sold at auction by the recorder within six weeks of location." That proposal was presented to the 1866 Montana Legislature, but the measure was killed by the House.

That the *Post* reflected the will of most of the Territory's residents was indicated by the Legislature's memorial to Congress in 1866 to prevent the sale by the federal government of Montana mineral lands.

In June, 1866, the newspaper still was vigorously pursuing its crusade:

> The astute legislators would not know a quartz vein from granite croppings or the shaft on our Yankee Blade from a Ranchman's well. It is certainly mortifying to see proposition after proposition presented to Congress having the same invariable end and aim—the settlement of our mining titles. Now be it known, once and for all, that we want no such quieting or settlement. All we ask is to be let alone. We are satisfied with our titles, if our excellent uncle will not meddle. . . .[18]

After much debate, Congress refused to approve the original bill but did pass a substitute measure called the Mineral Law. It did not provide for sale of the mineral lands by the federal government, although it did include requirements that prompted this anguished reaction by the *Post:*

> So crude, uncertain, unjust and ridiculous a document never "struck" Montana. The author ought to compose another, endowing a college for noodles, place it in his bosom, and then die.[19]

The Territory's delegate to Congress, Sam McLean, commented in a letter that he thought the law would "suit our folks in all of the mining States and Territories." To that, the editor said:

> If our Delegate thinks that such a law will please miners and "our folks in all of the mining States and Territories," his judgment was evidently made for a much smaller man.[20]

The newspaper argued that the statute would render uncertain the tenure of mining properties and in most cases would "involve the almost certain ruin" of prospectors and holders of quartz property. Moreover, it would financially ruin the many non-miners who had invested heavily in lode properties.

The law also required each company holding a quartz vein or lode to spend $1,000 in improvements on it before a patent could be claimed. In addition, the holder had to pay for a survey by a government official and an additional fee of $5 an acre. That stipulation, contained in section two, was likened to "feudalism in its most offensive form."

law termed a disgrace

The editor declared that 19 of 20 men would be unable to pay $1,000 for improvements plus the other costs. Only the large capitalists would seek quartz discoveries; there would be no incentive for the single prospector. The law was regarded as the foremost effort of "all the bare-faced attempts to ruin the masses for the good of the few. It is a disgrace to the statute book . . . a miserable botch and uncertain, vague and unjust."

The newspaper also objected to the sixth section which

> declares that no single person can hold more than two hundred feet (one claim) on any given lode. This amounts, in Montana, to an order for the confiscation of many hundreds of holdings which have cost the possessor, in numerous instances, all that he was worth in the world. A company, that is, two men or more, can hold three thousand feet on a lode, or fifteen times the amount that can be occupied by one person. This is another bid for capitalists.[21]

The newspaper predicted an outcry among miners and there was one. Of the many protests in letters from miners in ensuing weeks, several were printed in the *Post.*[22]

The newspaper's objections, however, were unheeded by the congressmen and by Montana's Delegate to Congress.

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[17]March 3, 1866, 2:1.

[18]June 30, 1866, 2:1.

[19]Aug. 18, 1866, 4:2.

[20]*Ibid.*

[21]*Ibid.*, 4:3.

[22]See, for example, Aug. 25, 1866, 6:1; Sept. 1, 1866, 1:3; Sept. 8, 1866, 7:1.

Editor Mills expanded mining coverage

In subsequent months, the *Post* centered its invective on Delegate McLean, blaming him for permitting passage of the mineral law. A typical comment:

> The passage of acts of this character shows to the voters of the Territory that they cannot exercise too much discrimination in selecting a proper representative to sit in the Congress at Washington. By the election of the present inefficient incumbent, they declared that they preferred a man who advocated certain political theories to one whose commanding talents and high character would have been invaluable in defeating unjust legislation.[23]

Despite the newspaper's failure to bar passage of the law, its crusade stands as eloquent evidence of its concern for the desires of the individual miner. Montana had been built by lonely prospectors who played their gigantic game of chance unfettered by laws. The very nature of their success, it seemed to the editor, brought restrictive laws. There was a fresh and pervasive sense of freedom on the frontier, and it was to be expected that the men who built cities in a wilderness would oppose any encroachment on their freedom by politicians thousands of miles away. The *Post* reflected that opposition in its editorial columns.[24]

Coverage of Montana mining activities was expanded in the following months under editor James H. Mills. On Aug. 3, 1867, the *Post* announced creation of a news section called the Mining Department. The principal contributor would be Judge William Y. Lovell, of whom the newspaper said: "There is, perhaps, no one in Montana with more ability and general knowledge of the mines and minerals of Montana than Judge Lovell."[25] The Mining Department would enable the *Post* to give more prominence to "that important interest." Lovell's first column, headed Mining Matters, appeared on page four, and his by-line continued to appear over the readable, in-depth articles until Dec. 28, 1867.

When proposals were made in the East in late 1867 to establish a National School of Mines, the *Post* supported the move with unusual enthusiasm. As might be expected, the editor thought such a school should be situated in one of "the great mining States or Territories":

> As we look at it, it is just as sensible to locate a Pomological seminary in the Desert of Sahara or an agricultural college on the Rock of Gibraltar as to establish a mining school in New York, Boston or Washington, intended to educate its students in gold and silver mining, virtually limited to the Rocky Mountains and the Western Slope. . . .[26]

Editor Mills added:

> By situating the college in the West, its students would be brought in actual contact with facts; their researches would be practical and their theories builded on realities; science would be advanced and art assisted; the endowment would return manyfold to the national coffers, and America would take the first rank in intelligent and economical mining. We hope to see this school established, and established where its results would justify the expenditure and add to our wealth and intelligence. The place is west of the Missouri.[27]

In early January, 1868, the *Post* devoted a column of rebuttal to a charge that it was being paid to exclude news from a certain unnamed mining camp. The allegation was made in a letter, part of which appeared in the newspaper, contending "there is a thorough organization among the quartz operators in the Territory to keep down any excitement in favor of this locality."

The criticism involved a letter that Mills had refused to publish. He replied that the *Post* was not "in combination with any operators, miners, mill men or others assisting one to the disadvantage of any of the others." The charge was utterly false, he said, and he did not think other newspapers in the Territory belonged to any such combination.

letter called objectionable

Mills explained that the letter, like many others received by the *Post*, contained objectionable features. It was "from first to last written in a spirit of spitefulness against gentlemen, not one of whom we were personally acquainted with, who, it is said, had visited the mining district referred to and gone away without purchasing quartz, something we did not know was a sin or misdemeanor." He said the letter called those men nearly every name of reproach in the vocabulary and he remarked:

[23] Sept. 1, 1866, 1:3.

[24] On June 22, 1867, the *Post* offered a lengthy and calm appraisal of the law. Apparently the fears expressed earlier had been largely unfounded, for the editorial seemed to imply at least mild approval of the law. It noted that the quartz owner could continue to hold his claim as before. If the owner spent $1,000 to develop his claim, he could apply to the government for a patent, pay the government $5 an acre and continue to work the claim without interference. The editor said: "[When] these patents are issued the government relinquishes and deeds to the owners of mineral lands, for the consideration of $5 per acre and expenses incurred, all its right and title to the same, thus placing it beyond the possibility of any subsequent legislation putting them up for sale or, as was suggested, retaining a percentage of the gross yield of the mines." Each Territorial subscriber to the *Post* received with the June 22 issue a copy of the Mineral Law.

[25] Lovell had been writing mining articles for the *Post's* rival in Virginia City, the *Montana Democrat*.

[26] Dec. 21, 1867, 1:5.

[27] *Ibid.*

> No paper in the mining regions has thrown open its columns more freely to those who write of the mineral resources of their neighborhoods than the Post, and it has been without prejudice or partiality. This we still propose to do, but in doing that, shall ever exercise unrestrictedly the right to decide what is proper for the columns of this paper and what is not. . . . We do not propose to participate in every personal dislike that may spring up in Montana.[28]

When the value of Montana's gold production dropped $6 million in one year (July 1, 1866, to July 1, 1867), Mills expressed grave concern and advocated a lengthy consideration of the causes. He suggested the reduction might have resulted from the transition from placer to quartz mining. But he also argued that "the larger portion of our quartz operations are commenced at the wrong place" and that most of the placer mines had not been "systematically, thoroughly or economically worked," rich pay streaks having been "gutted out" by transient miners. One remedy was to concentrate on systematic mining conducted by firms with sufficient capital to put in bed rock flumes and furnish enough water to "wash and clean up an entire gulch" instead of merely small sections. Many practical miners had said that at least 50 per cent of the gold in Alder Gulch awaited the scientific miner. What was needed was a "grand bed rock flume comprising the entire gulch," a project deemed practicable by engineers.

The decline of mining activity in Alder Gulch and the continued discovery of gold elsewhere in the Territory eventually were responsible for removal of the *Post* from Virginia City to Helena. The editor never could quite believe that Virginia City was a fading community, and the newspaper continued to print encouraging statements: "If Alder Gulch is 'played out,' we desire to state that there are claims in it which are producing $3,000 or more every week."[29] The defensive posture of the editorials was more and more evident[30] as impressive discoveries were announced in Helena's Last Chance Gulch and other areas.[31]

As early as March, 1865, the newspaper had printed letters about the discoveries at Last Chance and nearby gulches. A writer identified only as "C.H.S." said in the March 18 issue that "One would suppose Virginia City and, indeed, the whole of Alder Creek deserted by the number from there one sees in the streets [in Helena]." Another writer, "Viator," said, "Helena is a lively mining town. . . . Virginia must do away with her city taxes and look sharply to her interests if this place does not outstrip her very soon." And "Rover" asked, "What is the matter over at Virginia, that everybody seems to be stampeding from there to Helena? Is it because you have a city incorporation?"

helena section begun

The *Post's* responses to such letters usually were flaccid: "If we are dying, we don't feel it." Indeed, the newspaper felt compelled to start a special section of Helena news—a section that grew as the months passed.

Helena clearly had emerged in 1868 as the most valuable gem in what would become the Treasure State.[32] The proprietor[33] decided to move the newspaper to Helena, and the final issue in Virginia City appeared March 28, 1868. On April 25, 1868, the first Helena *Montana Post* bristled with enthusiasm about Last Chance Gulch. The editor still had "quartz upon the brain."

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[28]Jan. 11, 1868, 1:4-5.

[29]But 36 years later, Mills wrote: "The decadence of the Alder Gulch placers, which had surpassed all records in their product, was manifest [in 1868]. The location of Virginia City in almost the extreme south-west portion of Montana, the development of rich placers near the central part, especially in Last Chance, and the commercial facilities Helena had as the entrepot for traffic via the Missouri River and Fort Benton, all told in favor of Helena as against Virginia City in the matter of population, wealth and commercial supremacy." James H. Mills, "Reminiscences of an Editor," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, Vol. V, 1904, p. 285.

[30]"Are you going to Sweetwater? What for? We would like to know how many of those who now are afflicted with the Sweetwater fever have any reliable information that convinces them they can better their condition by going there. . . . You who are doing well in Montana have no cause to wander. Let well enough alone. You who are not, see the prospects brightening for a successful mining season. Take two thoughts before you go to Sweetwater." Feb. 22, 1868, 1:4.

[31]A letter from "Observer" at Butte City said: "This camp, which has been lying in the dark, or nearly so, during the history of Montana, now promises to be a good camp. It has many natural advantages, lodes almost innumerable and of inestimable richness. . . ." March 23, 1867, 2:1.

[32]Though Helena did not become the capital until 1875, it was apparent even in 1866 that the seat of the Territorial government would not remain in Virginia City. In late 1866 a bill seeking a vote on moving the capital to Helena garnered enough support to win passage in the House.

[33]D. W. Tilton sold his interest to co-owner Benjamin Dittes, who then moved the plant to Helena.

DOROTHY M. JOHNSON: A DISCOURSE ON WRITING FICTION

By *STEVE L. SMITH*

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> Youth passes, and youth was short for Marjory.
> One day last summer I saw her,
> And her face was old in the sunlight—
> Marjory, old at nineteen!
> In two long years we had never spoken,
> And she had been married.
> She lost her beauty in those two gray years
> Cooking over a rusty kitchen range,
> Slaving her life away for a fool,
> The slack-mouthed idler she married—
> All because her dying mother had made her promise.
> Oh, the dead have no right to bind us,
> Us, who have our young lives to live!

Thus begins "Marjory" in the March, 1924, issue of *The Frontier.* Some observers consider it the best product of Dorothy Johnson's brief career as a poet. It was based on an emotional experience[1] and, to Miss Johnson, good writing is born of emotion. In an interview with Kathryn Wright of the *Billings Gazette,* Miss Johnson discussed the subject:

> The important thing is that the short story starts with an emotion in the writer. At least mine do. And other writers I've talked with say the same. A writer should feel strongly about something. Strongly enough . . . to want to communicate that feeling to others. I start with an emotion. Then I try to think of people—characters—who might fit that emotion. People who would have logical connection with it. Then these people make the plot. I don't think about the plot first. I find an emotion. Probably through seeing something—people, maybe—or hearing something, or learning something. It's harder that way. Maybe. But that's the way I do it. Inefficient, perhaps. It's hard work. You get calluses off a typewriter just like off a shovel.[2]

In an article, "Emotion and the Fiction Writer," Miss Johnson wrote that while she never had tried classifying her emotions, those most useful to her in fiction writing were pity and admiration:

> We pity someone because of the situation he's in, and we admire him because of the action he takes. It might be wise for every fiction writer to decide what kind of people he admires, and why. Some fiction I have tried to read lately indicates that the authors thereof don't admire or pity anybody. I don't see how their characters can stand them or one another.
>
> A fiction writer must be willing to feel. He must accept his own emotions, not try to evade them. Then he must learn to extend them to purely imaginary people, the people he invents.[3]

There are other emotions, however: "Once in a while, it's whatever emotion it is that makes you giggle. Then I write a really funny story, one like 'I Woke Up Wicked.' I don't know what emotion that one would be but it's a kind of feeling in the pit of your stomach that makes you want to laugh out loud."[4]

[1]Interview with Dorothy Johnson, Missoula, Mont., Aug. 5, 1968.

[2]Kathryn Wright, "Dorothy Johnson's Tips on Fiction Writing," *The Billings Gazette Midland Empire Magazine,* Sept. 2, 1962, p. 1.

[3]Dorothy Johnson, "Emotion and the Fiction Writer," *Discourse, A Review of the Liberal Arts,* April, 1960, p. 114.

[4]Johnson interview, Aug. 12, 1968.

That compassion has, indeed, figured in Miss Johnson's short stories is indicated by a comment from Dr. Harold G. Merriam, her English professor at the University of Montana:

> The tendency . . . was for her to reveal conditions of working people. I remember one story . . . called "The Fruit Tramps" in which she shows great sympathy for the working class. That probably has been characteristic of her throughout her life.[5]

Professor Merriam's evaluation seems correct, judging from Miss Johnson's comments about Washington's Okanogan Valley migrant workers who inspired the story:

> I felt sorry for them. People were always talking about them in Okanogan during the fruit season. Everybody was suspicious of them because they were a footloose lot. . . . People at that time who stayed in one place were suspicious of wanderers.[6]

In a series of lectures delivered in 1959 at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., Miss Johnson described whom she admired and therefore chose to bring to life in her stories.

"I like to write about Indians and the rugged characters of frontier days," she said. "I admire physical courage. Perhaps one reason is that I am not endowed with courage myself."

research emphasized

She stressed the importance of research—asking questions and reading.

"You must be willing to bother. You must be explicit in what you write. The writer owes the reader answers to all questions, but the writer must first think of the questions."[7]

Human actions or deeds Miss Johnson cannot comprehend or identify with—actions for which she feels genuine disgust—affect her sympathy, altering it to the pity of contempt or transforming it to an emotion that precludes creation of a story. Once, while in the Missoula County Sheriff's office to get fingerprinted for a pistol permit, her sympathy was aroused by an impoverished young man and woman being released after a night in jail.

Miss Johnson became concerned about the couple's apparently limited resources—48 cents, a wallet, a comb and a marriage license—and the next day phoned a deputy to see if a modest fund could be established to help others who leave jail and need help. When the deputy told her why the two had been detained (they had damaged the home of an old woman who was in the hospital), the emotion that might have given birth to a story was transformed. Miss Johnson wrote:

> I cannot understand the young couple who did thát. Therefore, I cannot write a story about them or anyone like them. I pity them, against my better judgment, and wonder what made them into monsters. The strange thing is that I can understand armed robbery and even murder without having tried either one. I can write about outlaws and killers, identifying myself with them. But young, attractive people who commit wanton vandalism I cannot understand or write about. From this experience . . . there remains my unwilling pity, but I cannot translate it from life to a story.[8]

Miss Johnson has said that "fiction writers tend to reach out for new experiences and variations on emotions, because these are the seeds of stories. We need a store of these for future use, a private little granary. If we ever use them all up, how can we write anything more?" She used an anecdote to illustrate her point, then explained its significance:

> When I was about eleven, I went with a small group of people to a town 15 miles from home. That was quite an excursion. We traveled by bus . . . and took a basket lunch for economy's sake. Then we had to find a place to eat, and the place we found was somebody's front yard.
>
> I have never forgotten the people who invited us to have our lunch in their yard. They were a very old couple, cordial and eager. They shared with us what they had, rhubarb sauce. It was very sour. After we left them, I mentioned this, wondering why they hadn't put sugar in it, and someone explained quietly, "They're so poor they can't afford sugar."
>
> Then, as even now, that understanding had a strong emotional impact. Not even sugar to sweeten the sauce made from rhubarb they raised—but they gave strangers some of what they had. . . .
>
> These were old people, with a bleak present and very little future. They were wonderful people. I could write a story about people like them. They seem real . . . whereas the young vandals do not.[9]

Of the incident, Miss Johnson wrote:

> What I have told about these old people . . . is the kind of thing from which a story might develop when the emotion is translated from fact to fiction. There is no real beginning—we just happened to ask permission to eat in their yard. There is no end—we never heard another thing about them.
>
> If a writer used that emotional experience as a seed for a story, he might change every single thing in the actual event. He need not be bound by facts at all. He might not even use the emotional realization he started with. He would start with that bit of heartbreak and go anywhere his thoughts took him. But if he made a story from it, it would have some meaning that it doesn't have now.
>
> A fiction writer translates his emotions and creates people. This is why he writes. He *becomes* these people,

[5]Interview with Professor Harold G. Merriam, Missoula, Mont., Aug. 9, 1968.

[6]Johnson interview, Aug. 5, 1968.

[7]"Author Gives Some Tips on Story Writing," *Moorhead* (Minn.) *News*, Oct. 13, 1959, p. 11.

[8]Johnson, *Discourse*, p. 116.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 117.

A writer who creates characters is every one of them

and this is sometimes a tormenting experience. I have been Indian warriors and cowboys and homesteaders' wives and gold miners and captives of Indians. I have been bloody-handed outlaws and the grim men who strung them up, the victim and the victor, and pursued and the pursuer. I have been defeated and triumphant—but never "beat." Twice I have been killed.

A writer who creates characters is every one of them. This is probably why writers write. They get away from their own little world with its known dangers into a boundless great world where anything can happen. They live vicariously a thousand lives.

This is the finest kind of adventuring. There is no escape from reality so splendid as the escape of a writer dreaming over a sheet of paper.[10]

In an article for a handbook on writing, Miss Johnson recalled the time she was lost in a swamp.[11] Having read that three gunshots were an SOS, she fired three rounds from a .38 revolver and "stood around waiting expectantly for somebody to come plunging through the woods" to lead her out. Nobody came. After a reasonable wait, Miss Johnson, "avoiding the sinkholes," retraced her route, located the right trail and found her way out. She wrote:

This is exactly what a fiction writer always has to do—find his own way out. Firing three shots is the equivalent of waiting for somebody to show him exactly and infallibly how to write. Finding his own way out is the equivalent of actually writing stories—blundering around, rewriting, discarding, changing, trying over and over.

The analogy has a weakness, because there is one big difference between writing stories and getting out of a swamp. If a story gets too troublesome you can tear it up and forget it. But if you are physically lost, you'll keep struggling for a long time before you quit, because giving up can be fatal.

Planning a story is a matter of exploring in order to get out of a swamp—not by just any route but by the best one.

Absolutely everything in a story not yet written—or written but not completely satisfying—is subject to change. No words of a fiction writer are sacred. A writer should keep his mind open so that he is able to change, able to give up a good dramatic scene or sacrifice some wonderful dialogue because it doesn't fit.

And still, I'll admit that if he keeps too open-minded and doesn't hang on to some landmark idea, he can dream off in too many directions and never get a coherent story at all.[12]

Miss Johnson described a short-story course she took at New York University in which the instructor cautioned against forgetting the value of "If":

Your characters are in a certain situation that seems good. You know how you plan to get them out of it. But there may be better ways. What happens *if* Joe loses his temper? What happens *if* a planned meeting doesn't take place? What happens *if* . . . practically anything.

In brief, it's wise not to start with an iron-bound, unchangeable idea of what the story is going to be, because there may be better ways to tell it than the first one you thought of, or there may be better stories to be found in the same material.

But you do have to start with something, some landmark idea. From that, you explore outward. You may find such a promising trail to travel on that you'll get clear away from the beginning idea and never go back to it.[13]

Important to Miss Johnson is the concept of searching or exploring for a story. She believes many writers simply make up some characters and some action, then "brutally move the characters around to take care of the action," inventing something for them to say.

"The writer, himself, doesn't really believe it but he hopes he's writing a story," she said. "I found out when I was quite young that this is not the way I can do it. I have to search and find out what the story is supposed to be."[14]

finding a story

An example of finding a story—not making it, but searching and exploring for it—is provided by the following commentary:

I spent my first vacation after the war in southeastern Montana. I got there, on purpose, in time for the spring calf roundup. I followed cowboys around, asking questions of anybody who would talk, and looked constantly for story ideas. (A writer who is serious about his business doesn't sit back and wait for ideas to strike; he looks for them all the time.)

Nothing remarkable happened during the roundup—no romances, no injuries. But it was all new and wonderful to me, and I got lots of authentic background material, all of which went into a notebook for future study. I spent most of the time around camp or at the branding corral.

There was nobody around camp when the cowboys were out on circle except a couple of lady dudes and the cook and his wrangler. The wrangler carried water, cut firewood and rounded up the cavvy [cowboy slang, from the Spanish "caballard," for a herd of horses] when the riders wanted fresh horses. Wrangling was, I felt, beneath him; he was as competent a cowhand as any of the others, but he had been drafted to do the chores because somebody had to do them.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[11] Dorothy M. Johnson, "The Wonderful If," *The Writer's Handbook*, ed. A. S. Burack (Boston: The Writer, Inc., Publishers, 1954), p. 211.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Johnson interview, Aug. 5, 1968.

He didn't complain, but I began to feel sorry for him.

Now the valuable If went to work. What if the wrangler were a teen-age boy, eager to prove his skill in a man's job, but sentenced by his youth and bad luck to slave for the cook?

What if the roundup cook were a bad-tempered, autocratic, sharp-tongued old man? (Oscar of the roundup wasn't. But good roundup cooks are rare, and they can be cantankerous if they want to.)

There were two pretty good characters, with continuing conflict between them. Fine and dandy. Now for romance—and puppy-love romance can be very touching.

The girl would have to be very young and pathetic, out of place. Then she couldn't be a ranch girl; she'd have to be a dude.

How did she get out there in a roundup camp eighty miles from the nearest town? A female relative brought her, because the family said she had to. The girl was ignored while the female relative courted a cowboy. (And don't think dude girls wait for cowboys to court *them*!) Our little heroine had to hang around camp with the cranky cook and the troubled young wrangler.

The payoff, as I saw it, was that the girl hurt her ankle badly and the boy wrangler sneaked out of his bed-roll to sit outside her tent and talk to her all night, just to comfort her. The other men found out about it and he became the laughing-stock of the county.

The girl never forgot his kindness, and from that childhood romance grew a later, adult one.

It was all very touching, but it wasn't quite believable. I wasted a lot of time and effort on that story—then started all over.

This time the roundup background, which had started the whole thing, was omitted entirely. (I'll use it sometime, though. Nothing a writer learns is ever really wasted.)

Everything was changed in the new story. The hero was a cowboy, but a rich one, part owner of a family cattle empire. The girl was still an easterner, but she worked for a living. They weren't teen-agers, but in their romantic twenties. And they didn't meet in Montana, but on a dude ranch fifty miles from New York City. There was no cantankerous old roundup cook; instead, there was the hero's bossy, magnificent old grandmother.[15]

The second time, the story was light and funny rather than pathetic. *Argosy* published it as "Hold That Bull!"—not Miss Johnson's title and not under her name, either. Instead, the by-line read "By L. R. Gustafson."

example of "if"

Still another story generated by the If and published by *Argosy* was "Warrior's Exile," originally called "The Man Who Could Not Dream."

The facts on which the story was based were these: The Indians of the plains admired personal courage. They proved their courage, and won honor, by performing dangerous deeds. Their courage was bolstered by their faith in personal magic protection called "medicine." Young boys and men starved alone on hilltops until, exhausted and terrified, they went into a dream state. From what they experienced in the medicine dream they learned what their own protective magic was.

Now none of that is fiction. Generations of Indians lived by those beliefs.

The If was this: What if an Indian, completely normal in all other respects, always failed to get a medicine dream? He would be a failure in his own environment. He might be a hoodoo for his tribe, scorned and feared.

The story of "Warrior's Exile" concerned a Crow Indian's final desperate attempt to dream a magic dream or die of cold and starvation and weakness.

That's out of the ordinary; not every writer wants to write about Indians. But pick some other man, not an Indian, put him in an environment that he doesn't fit but cannot leave, give him enough strength of character to keep trying to adjust to it—and almost always, I think, you will have the kind of conflict that makes a story.[16]

Miss Johnson believes fiction writers profit little by being stubborn about story ideas. She contends that from the same material that produces an unsatisfying or unconvincing story, a writer may find a good story that is different. The evolution of her short story "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" is one example. It also illustrates one of her favorite devices—the so-called "switch" or twist.

Story ideas can come from anywhere. Some of mine come from western movies.

One came from a trite old gimmick that used to be popular in bang-bang horse operas, the old faithful situation in which the hero walks with measured tread down a dusty street to shoot it out with a villain.

There's a hackneyed situation, good for catcalls from the gallery in your neighborhood theater. It was new, I suppose, when Owen Wister used it in "The Virginian." It was good; it had wonderful suspense. But it's worn out now—and the reason it got worn out is that it was good.

In "iffing" around with that tense but trite situation, I tried an experiment in technique. Could that old impending-duel scene possibly be used again?

Writers are always looking for rules to go by. Here's one, to be used cautiously: When puzzled, try the "switch." That is, turn a situation around and see how it looks from another angle.

In these street duels, the western hero is always bold and brave. He straps on his Colt and off he goes while you hold your breath. You're not worried about his control of his iron nerves—only about the state of his health.

The switch I tried was this: What if the hero wasn't bold and brave? To add to his tribulations, what if he wasn't even a good shot?

Still "iffing" around, unsure of everything in this still-nebulous story idea, I had this problem: How would a scared man who wasn't a good shot ever get into a street duel anyway? He didn't fit the situation. He had no personality, no motivation. He was nothing but a wild idea, and so far from normal that no reader could accept him without a thorough explanation.

How did he get into this duel? For revenge, maybe. Why? What was he mad about? By "iffing," by eliminating a lot of possibilities, I got a picture like this:

A man is beaten and robbed on the prairie and vows vengeance. To seek it is suicidal, but he has nothing to live for anyway. (Therefore he is a cynic, a drifter.) If he is not a good shot, he is not a typical frontiersman;

[15] Johnson, "The Wonderful If," pp. 212-214.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.

therefore he has recently come from the East. He has been exiled by his well-to-do family, whom he had disgraced. He was by no means an admirable hero, but he improved in the course of the story.

What kind of man would have attacked and robbed him and set him afoot on the prairie, perhaps to die? A hard-case bully, of course, and there were such men among the gun-toters of the frontier. (I have a hard time believing in villains, but recollecting the infamous and historic Boone Helm of Montana gold-rush days restores my confidence. Boone Helm ate two men. But it was for other activities that the Vigilantes hanged him.)

A name for the villain came out of the air: Liberty Valance.

Still fumbling, I came up with another If: What if the hero only thought he killed the villain, but somebody else's shot really did it? There was a fresh angle!

So a third man got into the act—one who really could shoot. He was not admirable, either. But he was convincing. His name was Bert Barricune.

Bert was originally a brother of the girl who was in love with the hero. But what if, I thought, he's not her brother but a man who loves her in vain, has no hope of getting her but is so stubbornly faithful that he will save the life of the man she loves? Right there Bert stopped being her brother.

Another If came in: What if the hero didn't get a mere bullet nick, as they usually do in the movies? What if he had a crippled arm for the rest of his life? So he did. As a result, he had to change his temporary occupation—which was swamping out the Prairie Belle saloon—and study law. He became governor and then senator, and his political enemies didn't overlook his lurid past.

There was much more to the story. Actually, the duel scene didn't take up very much of it. But the idea of the duel was the original spark.

I didn't *make* that plot. Neither did it just grow. I *found* it, piece by piece, fitting together and discarding, moving and changing.[17]

Although "fitting together and discarding, moving and changing" has worked well, it resulted in an oversight in "Liberty Valance" as first published by *Cosmopolitan* in 1949. The period is established at the outset: "Bert Barricune died in 1910." The hero, Ransome Foster, by this time a senator, returns to town for the funeral. From this starting point, most of the story is told in a flashback to the late 1800s. But as the story ends, the year still 1910, the senator and his wife are being driven to an airport following Barricune's funeral.

"I did some rewriting and changed the time of it and didn't get that airport out," Miss Johnson recalled with a laugh. "I remember announcing to the editor by letter or on the phone or something that he should have caught that."[18]

The error also appeared in the first edition of Miss Johnson's book *Indian Country*, the 1953 short-story collection that included "Liberty Valance." She warned the book's editor of the mistake, but that warning also went unheeded.[19]

beginning a story

Miss Johnson has definite views on how to begin a story:

> If the writer starts too far before the climax, the story can be slow. If he starts too near it, he can get tangled up with awkward flashbacks.
>
> Finding the approach that has the greatest impact is a big problem for me. Of all the possible ways to begin any narrative, which one will hit the hardest? This problem arises, unfortunately, after all the "iffing" seems to be done for the story skeleton, and just when I yearn to go ahead before the bright light of inspiration fades.
>
> Besides sorting out all the Ifs involved in finding out what the story is about, I have to grope around finding the best way to start it. I can't find out until I try it—sometimes fifteen or twenty times.
>
> Anybody can plot a story mechanically and follow the plot without deviating and come out with some kind of narrative. I've tried it—often!—but it has never worked out. Finding a story is harder than plotting one, but for me it works better. In fact, it's the only way that does work.[20]

Story ideas, Miss Johnson believes, can come from anywhere. How to develop the story—how to find it and help it grow from the idea—depends, she thinks, on how the writer happens to be feeling at the time:

> Too much introspection can lead to madness, but a writer must look inside himself, because that's where his stories come from. How do you feel right this minute? Why you feel that way doesn't matter; the story doesn't have to be about your own troubles or triumphs. But they influence your current, fleeting emotional state, and that state will influence whatever story you are working on. . . .[21]

Miss Johnson believes a writer has to "listen to dialogue"—that he should be so familiar with dialogue that when it is written, it is not wordy, dull or hard to read. Dialogue, to her, is simply conversation that is clean, sharp and lean.

"Listen to people talk," Miss Johnson has said. "Listen and let it soak in. Then write it so that it's easy to read, understandable and gives an understanding of the person who's talking it. It takes a lot of writing."[22]

Significantly, Miss Johnson's characters do not curse or

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 214-216.

[18] Johnson interview, Aug. 12, 1968.

[19] Telephone conversation with Miss Johnson, Oct. 8, 1968.

[20] Johnson, "The Wonderful If," p. 217.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

utter obscenities. It is not unreasonable to expect that in attempting to portray accurately the speech of cowboys, outlaws, trappers, lawmen and scouts, she might require an occasional obscenity. Not so, says Miss Johnson.

"My theory is that if you give the tone, the reader will supply the word. Some of my characters are rough, tough and nasty, but the reader knows they are and he can supply the language."[23]

Miss Johnson recalls that at one time the *Saturday Evening Post* would not permit words such as "damn" in fiction:

> One time I used the word "fanny" and the *Post* took it out. I didn't think that was bad. It was when Beulah Bunny was learning to fence. This happened to me in a fencing lesson: The fencing master kept saying, "straighten your back, straighten your back." Well, I straightened it until it was practically broken. Finally, one of the other pupils next to me said, "He means pull in your fanny." Well, I had that happen to Beulah Bunny in the story and the *Post* took out the "fanny."[24]

In her article "Emotion and the Fiction Writer," Miss Johnson began a brief discussion of conflict by recalling a boy named Edward, the mainstay of one of her earliest literary efforts. Thanks to his 12-year-old creator, Edward was lost in the woods.

"I never got him out. I never explained how he got in, either. I skipped all that, because figuring it out would have been hard work. . . ."

Edward's story "started in the middle and never got very far past the middle," although it spanned numerous pages.

"But at least it wasn't static, as beginners' stories often are. Edward kept trying to get out of the woods. (Poor Edward. I created him and then deserted him. My conscience still hurts.)"[25]

element of conflict

About conflict:

> In any satisfying story, somebody wants something. Usually he makes an effort to get it. He may not succeed, but he does try. If he doesn't try, there may be a story in that: he is the kind of person who just lets things happen to him and then probably complains about it. In that case, the story is depressing and either very dull or very literary, perhaps both. My Edward kept trying. Anybody I write about tries. Let somebody else write about people who give up without an effort. There has to be a very intimate association between a writer and a person he invented. I do not care to associate with people I can't respect—although some of mine are pretty bad.
>
> And some of them are defeated, but they are never "beat." They go down shooting. Most of my stories are about people on the American frontier in the violent years when considerable effort was required just to stay alive. I respect those people, good or bad.
>
> The Tarzan books were popular—and to me forbidden—literature when I was writing about Edward. I borrowed them from a neighbor, hid them under the front steps, and read them privately. . . . Years later, I reread a couple of them and was sadly bored. But they illustrate the point about somebody wanting something and trying to get it. Tarzan was always trying to get from one place to another through the jungle. He was always being hindered by something—usually a hungry lion, as I remember the plots. He always killed the lion and then went on until he met another one.
>
> That is about as simple as narrative can be—somebody wants something but is prevented from getting it and has to struggle. That is conflict.
>
> The forever unfinished story of Edward, an American boy lost in an American forest, had enough conflict and suspense to make me remember it, although the manuscript has been lost for forty years. While I was writing it, I *was* Edward, lost and scared. I admired him. It was an honest story; there was emotion behind it, in the writer. It was my fault, not Edward's, that he never got home.[26]

A sidelight to Miss Johnson's writing concerns names for her characters, a task she often finds difficult. Preferring to concentrate on the story, she frequently calls them "hero," "narrator" or "X" in her notes.

"Sometimes I name people Foster—I don't know why—and so you run across Mr. and Mrs. Foster in two or three stories that have no connection. And then often their names begin with a 'W'—I don't know why that is either."

Miss Johnson recalls using the Manhattan telephone book to find names that "fit the story" on which she happened to be working. She believes many writers do the same and remembers one name problem where the technique might have been useful. The year was 1939, the place Greenwich Village, the project a novel:

> I called the hero Benny. Then, as I wrote, I realized he wasn't a Benny, that wasn't right. I changed him to an Eddie. That was a lot of work. No, he wasn't an Eddie, either, so I made him Joe. Joe was all right for him. Of course there were a lot of other problems . . . but that was the worst trouble I've ever had with a name. Benny would be a nice kind of little guy who could be kicked around; Joe was little but he was tough.[27]

One might assume that experience would result in greater efficiency in producing fiction. Miss Johnson does not think that has been true for her, primarily because of her belief in the importance of rewriting:

> It takes longer and longer to get the story down to where I'm satisfied with it. "Bonnie George Campbell," the first one I sold to the *Post*, I worked on for two days at white heat. Then I was satisfied. I was so excited I just couldn't wait to get it typed and mailed off to somebody. But the longer I write the more particular I get. . . . Some of them take years and years before I am happy.[28]

[23] Johnson interview, Sept. 12, 1968.
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] Johnson, *Discourse*, p. 113.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.
[27] Johnson interview, Aug. 12, 1968.
[28] *Ibid.*

We owe something to the gullible public

The short story "The Ten-Pound Box of Candy" is an example:

> I had written it several years before. It was too long and I couldn't figure out how to cut it and I just wasn't very happy about it. So I got it out and I guess I did some rewriting, I don't remember. I believe I did cut it because by this time it was cold. It was new to me and I could stand to cut it. *McCall's* [which bought it] was the first magazine my agent sent it to.[29]

Another example of her concern with rewriting is provided by her story "Journal of Adventure":

> That one I must have written nine or ten times. That was the one where the man was lost in the mountains and was probably going to die. He had a broken leg and I simply couldn't bear to go through this myself. I kept trying to avoid living through it and that's why I had to rewrite it so many times. When I finally faced facts, it didn't take any time at all.[30]

Miss Johnson believes that in the rewriting process, characterization is the least of her worries.

> I think the characters are all real to begin with. . . . It's not the characters that have to be polished. It's the wording and clarifying of the story. Maybe finding a new scene.[31]

"If you write fiction about the Lewis and Clark expedition, you'd better not have Sacajawea be an Irish girl lost from a wagon train," she once told a group of historians in Missoula.[32]

Throughout her career, she has attempted to keep in mind the difference between writing history and writing fiction.

"What right has a writer got to remodel history?" she asked in an article for *The Roundup*, official publication of the Western Writers of America. "It's usually better than fiction to begin with, so why mess up facts and make fiction out of the result?"[33]

She continued:

> It seems to me . . . we owe something to the gullible public. It *is* gullible. Some people will believe anything. I get mail from readers who assume that my short stories are all gospel truth, picked up from pioneer settlers. They give me credit for a good memory, which I haven't got, but no credit for imagination.
>
> You know how it goes from there: they have some old diaries kept by Grandpa, who once saw Kid Curry get on a horse, and all that's needed is for somebody to "make a story of it" and we'll both get rich. . . . I did write a story that might have been about Kid Curry, after talking to a man who knew him, but by calling him the Buckskin Kid I took off the shackles of history.[34]

advice on characters

In her tips on fiction writing, Miss Johnson said: "Don't use real people. Let them give you ideas or emotions. Then go from there with your knowledge and imagination."[35]

She has said:

> A story ought to stand by itself, without needing to be propped up by the great names of the West. A while ago I bought a paperback that purported to be about Henry Plummer's road agents.
>
> Don't ask me the author's name. I haven't got the book anymore, and I don't want him to drygulch me anyway.
>
> The names of the characters were real, but the things they did in that book they did not do in real life. Now if the author was writing about real people, why didn't he stick to real events? They were better than fiction anyway. Or if he wanted to write straight fiction, which he was certainly doing, why use real names as a crutch? No, I am not talking about Haycox's *Alder Gulch*. The major characters in that are imaginary, and the historical characters are properly used as background. . . .
>
> If a story itself is good reading, the man behind the gun can be named John Smith—he doesn't have to be Cole Younger.[36]

Speaking in 1967 to delegates to the Centennial Conference on the History of the Canadian West, Miss Johnson again discussed history versus fiction while reviewing use of historical material in writing for the mass media. She said:

> Forgive me if I define fiction and nonfiction. You probably know the difference, but I have to do this for my students at the University of Montana and for many other audiences.
>
> Magazine articles are nonfiction. They are usually packed with facts. They may also include some opinion. The facts come from interviewing and research and sometimes from experience.
>
> Stories are fiction. They are inventions. There doesn't have to be one single true thing in them. But a good story seems true. The people in a good story seem real, although they are probably entirely the creation of the writer.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] "Hell Gate Said Proposed As Monument," Missoula (Mont.) *Missoulian*, Dec. 16, 1954, p. 2.

[33] Dorothy M. Johnson, "So History Ain't Good Enough?" *The Roundup*, VII (May, 1959), p. 9.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Wright, *loc. cit.*

[36] Johnson, *The Roundup, loc. cit.*

> Maybe the reason it's harder to write fiction than articles is that you don't have to stay inside any fences. Facts are fences, and very handy. Outside those fenced boundaries a writer can get lost. The only requirement in fiction is that the people must seem real and the sequence of events should seem inevitable. This is a pretty big order.
>
> It is not so easy to base fiction on historical fact as it might seem. Starting with facts, you have some foundation to work on; you have less imagining to do. This should make historical fiction easy to write. But it's not easy to write. Because the facts get in the way of the imagination.
>
> How much does a writer dare change? How much will his conscience let him change? How much dialogue may he attribute to his characters when he can't prove that these real people really said any such thing? He has a battle with his conscience—or he should have one.[37]

Miss Johnson mentioned a hypothetical situation in which the writer is producing fiction about the Sioux chief Sitting Bull. Soon after leading his people into Canada following the Battle of the Little Big Horn, Sitting Bull confronts a Mountie (whom the Sioux trusted). The writer wants to relate the conversation but is unable to find a record of it. Miss Johnson answered her rhetorical question "What are you going to do?" as follows:

> Maybe you'll figure out what they should have said and put the words into their mouths. Maybe you can't bring yourself to do that. If you were a hack writer, you wouldn't hesitate to invent conversation or even events. A hack writer might make the Shoshone girl, Sacajawea, the mother of Sitting Bull, who was a Sioux.
>
> If you're an honest writer, you have to face this problem or else not write about Sitting Bull. There is some wonderful historical fiction in which great writers face the problem and solve it to the satisfaction of everybody. It can be done.
>
> But I don't do it. I get around the problem instead of crashing through it. I take off from a real event but change the people's names. So I'm not pretending to write historical fiction. It is just fiction for which history was the springboard.[38]

The importance of emotion to Miss Johnson's writing helps, perhaps, to explain why she chooses not to "crash through" the problems presented by straight history or straight historical fiction:

> A writer who uses history as a source looks for the emotion in it. You may think of me, therefore, as sentimental, and I can't argue. But if I don't feel strongly about something, I don't write about it.
>
> History is full of tremendous emotion, but if you're writing straight history so many facts have to be crowded into so few words that the emotion sometimes gets squeezed out.
>
> Historians have to boil down a dramatic event, stressing what led up to it and what the result was. In some survey courses, a student who stays home with a bad cold may miss a couple of major wars.[39]

Miss Johnson stressed that as a writer she wanted to be read by "lots of people, who want to be entertained." Of those people, she said:

> The layman wants to see something happening to people. If they don't seem alive when he's reading, he'll leave you. The little things are important to him. He's reading for pleasure, not for college credit.
>
> I'm not a historian. I'm a layman. The layman wants details. He doesn't want to read about something. He wants to see it happen in his mind. He wants to feel it.[40]

importance of action

In this connection, it is appropriate to mention that action is among the most important elements of Dorothy Johnson's fiction. Simply put, she likes action.

> One big trouble I had for several years was that my people never did anything. They just sat around and thought at each other and didn't say very much and didn't move very much and didn't do very much. This went on up until the early 1940s when I finally began to publish in the *Post*. Some people still write that way and get published but I don't read very far in that sort of thing.[41]

Miss Johnson regards herself as a storyteller who wants to tell a good story because "I owe it to my readers."

> Something I didn't realize for a good many years is that my readers don't owe me anything. They are doing me the courtesy of reading what I wrote, so I owe them a good story. This is why I can't read many of the stories that are being published, especially in the *New Yorker*. Those stories bore me to death. Those authors owe me something and they aren't coming across with it.
>
> The people, the action—if any—plow along. There seems to be no movement. If you tried to graph one of those stories, it would just go right across the graph paper. It wouldn't go up or down. They do a lot of talking but it's pretty tiresome conversation to me.[42]

From historical accounts have come many of Dorothy Johnson's most successful stories. If the number of reprintings provides any indication, "Lost Sister," reprinted 24 times in several languages, is among the best. Miss Johnson traced the development of the story for the Canadian historians.

> Down in Texas, in 1836, a group of settlers was attacked by Comanche Indians. Several of them were killed, and three or four were captured. One of the captives was a little girl named Cynthia Ann Parker. She was nine years old.
>
> She grew up as an Indian, married an Indian, had two sons and a daughter—and was captured by white soldiers when she was 33. As a true story, this is tremendously

[37] Dorothy Johnson, "The Use of Historical Material in Writing for Mass Media," address delivered at the Centennial Conference on the History of the Canadian West, Banff, Alta., Canada, May 20, 1967.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Johnson interview, Aug. 5, 1968.

[42] *Ibid.*

moving. She had become an Indian, and now her white family expected her to become white again. She never did adjust. She grieved. She suffered. And she died at 37.

Just one photograph was ever taken of her—after the whites took her back to civilization. That's the saddest face I ever saw. She wasn't a white woman any more. She was a captive Indian. She couldn't speak English. I think she died of heartbreak. One of her sons became the great Chief Quanah Parker. She would have been proud of him.

I was so moved by her picture that I had to write a story. . . .

But only a student of western history would guess that it (the story) has any connection with Cynthia Ann Parker. History was my jumping-off place. I could change anything I wanted to and keep anything that seemed good for the story. It doesn't purport to be history. I had no battle with my conscience. The story I wrote didn't mention Cynthia Ann Parker, and what happened to the woman I wrote about was not what happened to Cynthia Ann Parker.[43]

Later, in her book *Some Went West*, Miss Johnson used the historical facts as facts to relate, with other short biographies of frontier women, the true story of Cynthia Ann Parker.

"Her grandfather, who spent years trying to find his lost ones and did find some of them, wrote it all down, and I was able to get this material after considerable effort," she explained.

In "Virginia City Winter," a story in her book *Flame on the Frontier*, Miss Johnson used facts from history "without any qualms at all."[44] Incidents used as background include the hangings of Sheriff Henry Plummer and his road agents, the hanging of Joseph Slade and the wild flight into town of the latter's wife, Molly, when she learned what was happening.

"There was no need to change any of that," Miss Johnson said. "The story I wrote is about a hard-luck family, purely imaginary, that was there at the time and was influenced by these events."[45]

For Miss Johnson, "sometimes a tiny bit of history is enough to start the dreaming process that produces fiction." Once, in the New York City public library, she read in Paul Wellman's *Death on Horseback* a footnote that told of the Eastlicks, a frontier family living in a Minnesota settlement raided by the Sioux.[46] The father and three of the five boys are killed. Before her capture, the mother hides her infant son, Johnny, and charges her only other surviving son, 11-year-old Merton, with his care. Eventually Mrs. Eastlick escapes. She is found by whites, "crazed with the belief that her whole family is dead." While she is being taken to another settlement, however, Merton and the infant are found.

"The lad had carried the baby every foot of the way, hiding from the Indians and subsisting on berries," Wellman's footnote said. "He was an emaciated skeleton, with the flesh worn off his bare feet and was unable to speak for days afterward. But the baby was safe and sound."[47] Miss Johnson said:

I went home and went to bed but I couldn't go to sleep because there was all this massacre going on right there. I tried for an hour or so to sleep but these were real people and there were terrific scenes of violent action and dreadful fear. I didn't know how those scenes hooked up and I didn't know who these people were, but finally I gave up trying to sleep and got up and started writing in shorthand just as fast as I could go. . . . I didn't know if there was a story and I wasn't thinking about that. These things were actually happening in my mind without being invited. Heaven knows I had to go to work the next day. I think I wrote until 2 o'clock or 2:30 and then I went to bed. The next day, after a full day's work [she was managing editor of *The Woman*], I came home and transcribed all this stuff on the typewriter. It surprised me.

I had given it a little thought on the subway, but the rest of the day I had been working for Farrell Publishing Corporation and I didn't have time to think about it. I transcribed it and I still couldn't see how it hitched up. I didn't understand who these people were and what was going on. But I . . . found that if I did a little moving, I could find out how the scene connected. Then I had to invent and create some new characters to flesh out. . . .[48]

"Flame on the Frontier" originally was nearly 8,000 words. Miss Johnson thought the story was a sure winner, but the major magazines did not. Her agent turned to *Argosy*, then considered a secondary market, and it sold for $750, about half of what it would have brought in the *Saturday Evening Post* or *Collier's*.

"I called it 'Family Album' because it seemed to me that's what it was about and I wanted a very quiet title for a bloody story," Miss Johnson said. "But *Argosy* doesn't like quiet titles and called it 'Flame on the Frontier.'"[49]

Miss Johnson's late-evening bout with "Flame on the Frontier" indicates the pattern of her writing schedule in subsequent years. Until the spring of 1967, the only time she had for writing was at night or on weekends.[50]

[43]Johnson, address delivered at the Centennial Conference on the History of the Canadian West.

[44]*Ibid.*

[45]*Ibid.*

[46]*Ibid.*

[47]*Ibid.*, quoting Wellman.

[48]Johnson interview, Aug. 12, 1968.

[49]*Ibid.*, Aug. 19, 1968.

[50]Now, however, with the relative freedom of retirement from regular work schedules, she is able to start writing early in the morning and work effectively. A victim of insomnia, which began in the late 1930s as she worked on a novel, she sees a definite link between her mind being productive and her inability to sleep.

Miss Johnson may not have enjoyed her reading of George Gissing's *House of Cobwebs* during her senior year of college, but the experience, nevertheless, was valuable. In classifying Gissing's "gruesome, melancholy little essays," she provided herself with a quick course in form. Miss Johnson said:

> Form was of greatest importance to me then and it still is. A story has a beginning, a middle and an end. A sketch is not a story but just a piece of something. This slice-of-life business I never did go for. It starts in the middle of something and ends in the middle of something and nothing has been resolved and nothing really has happened. This doesn't interest me in the least. Something has got to happen and something is either changed or not changed because of it. That's what makes a short story. Sometimes I do start in the middle but something has happened before that is of consequence. Someone has made a decision, one way or another, and because of it his life has been changed. It's usually character that makes for this change or lack of change—maybe the man just hasn't got gumption enough to change. That doesn't happen very often with my people, though, because they are usually strong characters one way or the other, good or bad.[51]

Miss Johnson believes nearly every poet, fiction writer, artist and creative scientist has a helper to whom he never can give credit in public because of the helper's name: Genius. In a 1961 article, "The Years and the Wind and the Rain," she discussed the concept of genius as defined by the ancients. She also described how she believed it influenced her writing:

> Sometimes the writer writes more profoundly than he really can, and he knows it. But he can't admit it. He can't give proper credit to his genius, because that would be boasting, which in our culture is not permitted. Therefore he must pretend that he did this fine thing all by himself—and that is not only boasting but a big lie besides.
>
> The trouble is in the word "genius." We think of it as "extraordinary power of invention, native intellectual power of an exalted type." We equate genius with a high IQ.
>
> Centuries before I progressed through the public schools of Whitefish, Montana, genius had another meaning. The religion of the ancient Romans held that every person had his own genius. It was an attendant guardian spirit allotted to him at birth to govern his fortunes and determine his character and finally to conduct him out of the world.
>
> This makes sense. What everybody has, nobody can boast about. To an ancient Roman, it was no more remarkable to possess a genius than it was to have ten toes. They were all part of the package. I suppose a successful man could assume that he had an especially good genius, and a failure could find comfort in the thought that he wasn't entirely to blame.
>
> We have lost, except in dictionaries, this meaning of "genius." Maybe everybody doesn't have a tutelary spirit now. Maybe it's still there but dormant, silent and powerless because we don't know about it or don't believe in it.
>
> A creative artist is likely to know he has a genius, although he may prefer to let the world think that he wrote his book or composed his music or painted his picture all by himself. Of course, the genius isn't always on the job. Many a book is written entirely solo and it would be an insult to one's genius to give it a by-line.
>
> Now that I've gone into the antique meaning of "genius," I can admit modestly that I have one, in the sense that everybody is entitled to one, and mine is free to help me because I recognize its existence and am grateful to it. . . .
>
> My genius is a flibbertigibbet, here today and gone tomorrow, or more likely here yesterday when I was too busy to listen and unaccountably missing today when I have a couple of free hours and a fresh ribbon in the typewriter.[52]

formulas termed useless

One of the most important lessons Miss Johnson has learned about writing is that attempting to follow a success formula—trying to imitate others—is useless. In college, after reading Ernest Hemingway's early short stories, she was impressed enough with his lean, objective style to try to emulate it. She liked Kipling's stories and subsequently went through a Kipling period. She has commented:

> I think every beginning writer tries to adopt the style of somebody he admires. It took a long time before I found out how I was supposed to write.
>
> Hemingway's objective approach—where he told what people said and the reader understood—appealed to me. But I used to do things the hard way. I was always looking for limitations; I think most fiction writers do: If you could only find out what the rules are that a successful author follows, then you could be successful too. But after you have been writing for a long time, you find there are very few rules and that you might as well forget about formulas and stop buying books that tell you how to write stories. Nobody can tell you how. Everybody has to find out for himself.[53]

A statement she made in a 1958 speech before the Polson, Mont., Chamber of Commerce summarizes best, perhaps, Dorothy Johnson's view of her craft.

"Some people think writing is like building a house; you draw your plans and work from them. But writing is more like drilling for oil—you don't know for sure where the oil is, but you must find it, pump it out and refine it."

[51] Johnson interview, Sept. 12, 1968.

[52] Dorothy M. Johnson, "The Years and the Wind and the Rain," *The Montana Institute of the Arts Quarterly*, XIII, Winter, 1961, p. 3.

[53] Johnson interview, July 17, 1968.

The Journalism Faculty

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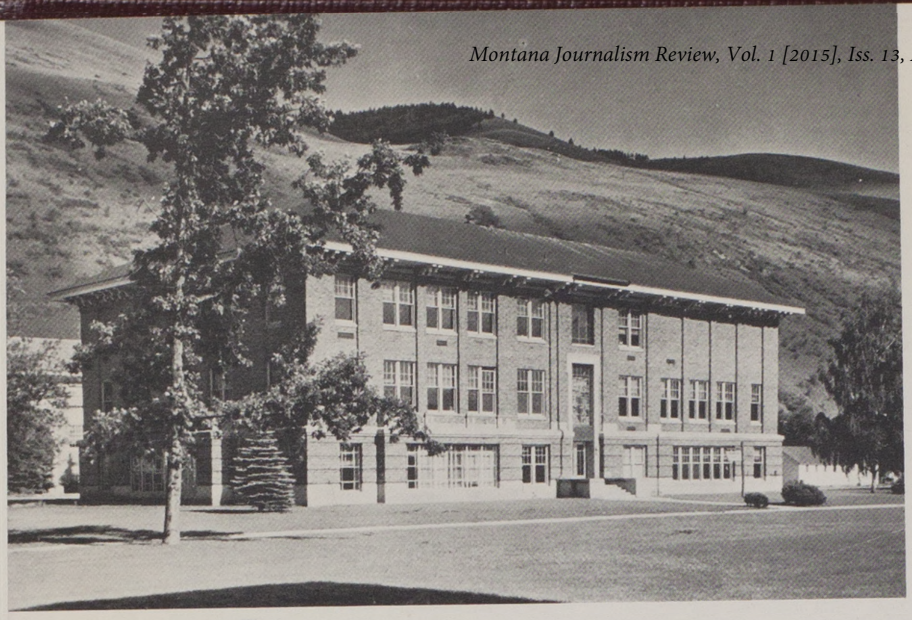

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Joseph Kinsey Howard

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